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G. A. Sutt. Engl. Portland.

No reading can make a man wise without thinking. Thinking is indeed the very germ of self-cultivation. *Taylor.*

THE
Young
MAN'S ASSISTANT.



PORTLAND:
S.H. COLESWORTHY.
1838.



THE
YOUNG MAN'S ASSISTANT,
IN EFFORTS AT
SELF-CULTIVATION.

BY JASON WHITMAN,
AUTHOR OF THE YOUNG LADY'S AID.



PORTLAND:
S. H. COLESWORTHY.
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PREFACE.

I have, for a long time, been deeply interested in the improvement and character of the younger portion of society, both male and female. I have felt that in view of the future character of our community, in view of the purity and permanency of our free Institutions, in view of the stability and best influences of our religious privileges, the younger portion of society is, by far, its most important portion; for I have felt that, in all these respects, the future condition of this country depends on the young. Take, as an illustration, the subject of Temperance. The advanced and the middle-aged have done much for the establishment of this cause. They may still do much.—But, after all, it depends on the young to carry the cause forward to its complete perfection, to its entire and universal prevalence. If the young are indifferent upon the subject, or are, in heart and practice, opposed to the cause, all that the more advanced can do will be comparatively and eventually in vain. The more advanced will soon be gone. The young will remain to give a character to their own time, and to mould and fashion in

some degree the character of the times which may succeed their own. If, therefore, the young say that intemperance shall prevail, then it will prevail, notwithstanding what has been done, or what may still be done by the middle aged and the old. So too, if the younger portion of the community determine that temperance shall prevail, and mark the character of the community that is just entering upon the stage, it will be so, notwithstanding the indifference or the opposition of their elders. And thus it is, in regard to all the various interests of society, whether they are social, civil, literary or religious. It is for the young to give the character to the times and the community which may succeed the present. It is for this reason that I have felt so deeply the importance of the young. It is for this reason that I have written for the young. I have thought that our Young Ladies were in danger of yielding themselves slaves to frivolity, vanity and fashion. And I have endeavored, in the Young Lady's Aid, to arrest their attention and direct it to their own solid and real improvement, to the establishment of a substantial foundation for a life of usefulness and happiness.

In regard to our young men, I would say, that I have seen them, as I have thought, surrounded by a multitude of dangers. There is indifference to the importance of the season, that is fast passing from them, the season of youth, which, by leading to habits of indolence, may shed a blighting influence over their whole future lives. Then

there are the temptations to dissipation, by which they are surrounded and beset. And, finally, they are now in great danger, from the circumstance that their importance in the community is beginning to be felt, and their efforts and influence to become prominent, I have sometimes thought too prominent. We have our Young Men's Associations for almost every imaginable purpose, distinct and separate from the Associations of the more advanced. And such are the feelings of the times, that the middle-aged and sometimes even the old, choose that their efforts and influence should receive currency, by passing under the fashionable title of young men's efforts and influence. It seems to me that there are some evils resulting from this state of things. Our young men rush forward into active life, far too soon, or at least, with far too little preparation for its duties. And, not having formed habits of self-cultivation, they are hurried along by the pressing duties which crowd upon them, and so pass through life without making one half the improvement, or securing one half the enjoyment which they might otherwise have done. Then too, the young, being ardent in their feelings, of excitable passions, and of comparatively feeble discretion and judgment, are too apt to be bitter and violent, to carry things to extremes, and to seize upon whatever is new, merely because it is new. Who are our most violent politicians? Are they not in most instances, young men? Who are the most rash in-

novators? Are they not, in most instances, young men? Who are in most danger of wild and extravagant speculations, who most fond of throwing off all regard for established forms and usages? Are they not, in most instances, young men?—When I have reflected upon the evils, which I have thought, resulted in some degree, or at least have been greatly increased by the prominence which is either assumed by, or given to young men I have asked with much earnestness, what can be done? And the answer to my question has been, it is no matter how young a man is called into active life, provided that, by the knowledge he has acquired, the mental habits he has formed, and the soundness of judgment he has secured, he is prepared for its duties, temptations and trials. It is often the case that one man is as mature in judgment, discretion and a control over passion, at twenty, as another may be at forty. I have thought, therefore, that the proper way of meeting this state of the times, is to address young men themselves, to endeavor to awaken them to just notions of the duties involved in the prominence which is now given them. I would have them so feel this prominence and importance, as to be prompted by their feelings to greater efforts for improvement. I would have every young man feel that, although his education may have been deficient, still, there is no reason why he should pass through life without making advances. The high-way of knowledge is open to all, and I should

be glad to see all walking therein. I have therefore endeavored to throw out, in this little work, such suggestions as might serve to awaken to the importance of efforts at self-cultivation and to give some direction and assistance in such efforts.

I am aware that there are already many books prepared for young men. *The Young Man's Friend*, *The Young Man's Guide*, *The Young Man's Aid*—these, and others like them, are all of them valuable books. It is not expected, nor is it desired, that *The Young Man's Assistant* should take the place of any of these. It asks only a place by their side, as a younger brother of the same family.

I have directed the attention of young men, in these letters, to their own minds, and have given some sketches of mental philosophy, in its application to personal and practical improvement. I have done this for a particular reason. I well remember, that, while acquiring my education, we were conducted, in due time, to the study of mental Philosophy. And a perceptible change was produced upon most of the class. A new object of intense interest was laid open to their study—the mind—their own minds. And the study excited us to thought and reflection. In this way, frivolity and nonsense were dissipated, the fascinations of the novel disarmed, and its enervating influence upon the mind prevented. In this way too, coolness of judgment and soundness of discretion were secured, while the power and control of the passions was in a de-

gree weakened. Attention then to the study of mental Philosophy, had, in that particular case, a beneficial influence over the minds and the characters of those who pursued the study. Again, I have seen many who have not enjoyed the advantages of a public education, and whose attention was not in early life directed to the subject of mental Philosophy, but who have, in later years, become interested in Phrenology, and, in that way, have been led to study the mind, to watch the operations of their own minds, — have been led to thought and reflection. Now, although I am neither a believer nor an unbeliever in regard to the claims of Phrenology, yet I sincerely believe that its advocates have done good, because they have awakened men to thought and reflection, to the examination of their own minds.

I have hoped in the sketches of mental Philosophy which I have here given, to be instrumental to the same end. It may be that my readers will reject every position which I have laid down upon this subject, as incorrect and unsound. But they cannot do this without thinking, reflecting, watching the operations of their own minds for themselves. “But thinking is the very germ of self-cultivation.” I shall, even in that case, by provoking them to thought, have been their assistant in self-cultivation. Indeed, I shall have accomplished the very purpose for which I have written, for my object has been not to establish my own positions so much as to awaken my readers to think

and reflect, to examine and judge for themselves. Still further, I have hoped that by giving the minds of my readers this direction, by awakening them to this effort, I might be instrumental in leading them to still further enquiries, as to the future and eternal condition of the mind or soul. I have feared that men have not faith in themselves as spiritual beings. And I have hoped that the more they should study themselves as intellectual, as thinking beings, the more would they cherish a faith in themselves as spiritual beings.

I have thus stated the views and feelings with which this little work has been prepared. I now send it forth to accompany *The Young Lady's Aid*, for the favorable reception of which by the public I feel truly grateful, — with the prayer that it may be blessed to the improvement of the young men into whose hands it may fall; that it may awaken them to the importance and convince them of the necessity and possibility of self-cultivation, and be to them truly an assistant in their attempts to improve themselves.

JASON WHITMAN.

The first part of the history of the world is the history of the human race. It is a history of progress, of discovery, and of conquest. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

The second part of the history of the world is the history of the human mind. It is a history of thought, of reason, and of knowledge. It is a history of the human intellect, of the human imagination, and of the human will. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

The third part of the history of the world is the history of the human heart. It is a history of love, of compassion, and of mercy. It is a history of the human emotions, of the human feelings, and of the human passions. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

The fourth part of the history of the world is the history of the human hand. It is a history of labor, of industry, and of art. It is a history of the human skills, of the human talents, and of the human abilities. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

The fifth part of the history of the world is the history of the human spirit. It is a history of faith, of hope, and of charity. It is a history of the human beliefs, of the human values, and of the human principles. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

The sixth part of the history of the world is the history of the human soul. It is a history of the human inner life, of the human inner world, and of the human inner self. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

The seventh part of the history of the world is the history of the human body. It is a history of the human physical life, of the human physical world, and of the human physical self. It is a history of the human mind, of the human heart, and of the human hand. It is a history of the human spirit, of the human soul, and of the human body. It is a history of the human race, of the human world, and of the human future.

THE
YOUNG MAN'S ASSISTANT.

LETTER I.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SEASON OF YOUTH.

Introduction—Season of youth important—because the young begin to act for themselves—Important in regard to the employment of time—the choice of companions—in regard to feelings of self-dependence and in regard to the formation of tastes and opinions—The character is in the process of formation, whether attended to or not—The importance of correct conduct in youth is not felt as it should be—conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

When I have looked around me and have seen young men of fine talents, of lovely dispositions and of great promise, wasting the precious season of their youth, in utter indifference to all self-improvement, or worse than

wasting it, by spending it in vicious indulgences, laying up for themselves a store of future wretchedness and misery, I have, involuntarily, asked why is this, how can it be prevented? I have thought that, perhaps, such young persons were not aware of the vast importance of the season of youth, its importance to their future happiness and to their future characters. I have felt that, perhaps, these very persons might listen attentively to one, who, from motives of friendship and in a spirit of kindness, should speak to them upon the subject, and might even feel grateful for the advice he should give. I have determined, therefore, to address a series of letters to young men, offering them such hints and suggestions, as may seem to me calculated to awaken them to the importance of self-cultivation, and to assist them in their efforts to improve themselves.

My first position, and it is one to which I would ask your particular attention, is, that the season of youth is of far more importance to the individual, to his future character and future happiness, than any other period of life. The period of childhood is important,

vastly important, in its influences and consequences, which extend far onward into the future years of life. But its importance does not come so directly home to the individual himself; because, during the period of childhood, he is under the direction and subject to the control of others. Were I speaking to parents or guardians or teachers, I should say, childhood is to you the most important period in the lives of those placed under your care, because the formation of their characters is more entirely under your control at that than at any other period of their lives. For the same reason, I say to the young man, the season of youth is to you the most important period of life; because the formation of your character is then more entirely under your own control than at any other season of life. In childhood your conduct is directed by others. In manhood your conduct will be shaped by the habits which you have formed during childhood and youth, which will have become too fixed and obstinate to be controlled by the exercise of the will. It is then during the season of youth, during the period

from boyhood to maturity, that the formation of your characters is most entirely within your own power. During that period, you begin to act, more fully than you have ever before done, for yourselves, you are, to a greater extent than before, your own masters. In childhood it was your parents or guardians who thought and made selections for you, and who felt anxious for you. Did they perceive, that, by spending your time in idleness, you were contracting bad habits? With how much anxiety were they filled, how carefully, how intensely did they exercise their thoughts in providing for you employment, and such employment as might be agreeable to you? Of all this parental anxiety you were ignorant. You had only to follow their directions and engage in the employment which they pointed out. Did they perceive that you were in danger of ruin from the evil influence of bad associates?—With how much greater anxiety were they now filled? How many thoughtful days and sleepless nights did they pass in determining how they might rescue you from your danger, what counsel and advice they might give, and

what selection of companions they might recommend? Of all this you were ignorant.— And, perhaps, you made all this tenfold greater than it otherwise would have been, by your unwillingness to follow readily their suggestions.

But now, in these and in many other respects all is changed. Many of you now leave parents and home, that you may enjoy better opportunities of becoming acquainted with business, and of preparing for the active duties of life. And those of you, who remain at home, find your situations much changed. You are so much away from your parents, that you can scarcely be regarded as under their watch or subject to their control. You are now called upon to think, to select, and to act for yourselves. You are now exposed to dangers, not perhaps to greater dangers than those to which you were exposed in childhood. But they will appear to you to be greater, for you are to meet and to overcome them yourselves, in reliance upon your own individual energy, and not through the assistance of others.

The danger to which you are now exposed

you will especially feel in regard to the right improvement of time. Although most of your time will be employed in your regular pursuits, still you will have many hours of leisure. This portion of your time you will regard as your own, to be spent as you please, without direction or control from your parents or your employers. And here let me assure you that all interested in your welfare are watching with intense interest, to note the manner in which you spend these leisure hours. It is often the case, that one whose conduct is perfectly correct while under the control of others, and who is perfectly contented and happy to be under that control, seems to have no power of employing himself during his leisure hours, no capacity to estimate aright the bearing of different pursuits upon future character. He has no definite and fixed purpose before him and is striving to accomplish no particular object. And, therefore, he is in great danger of becoming the sport of any companion that may solicit, any fancy that may suggest itself, or any temptation that may assail him.

There are others, who have been restrained by parental authority, and who now seem disposed to indemnify themselves for what they think they have lost and suffered. They give loose reins to their appetites, propensities and passions, and become reckless of all future consequences. And thus it often happens, that those who have been trained by parents in the most strict and careful manner, become dissipated and profligate as soon as left to themselves. You perceive, then, that there may be much correctness of conduct while under the care of parents and while devoted to the regular employments of the day, and at the same time, much incorrectness in the manner of spending leisure hours. And which of these seasons, the season of regular employment, or that of leisure, do you suppose is regarded with the greatest anxiety by friends, which is considered as giving the clearest indication of what may be expected in your future characters? I can assure you it is the short season of leisure, rather than the longer season of regular employment. And why so you ask? I will tell you. Your friends per-

ceive that, even now, every moment, which is at your disposal, is wasted in idleness or given up to dissipation. And this circumstance they regard as indicative of your present taste, and a fearful omen of the manner in which a still larger portion of your time will be spent, when it comes to be all at your own disposal.

Still further, every hour, at this period of your life, is exerting its influence in forming habits, in fixing tastes, and in determining the future character. If your leisure time is, even now, wasted in idleness or devoted to dissipation, you are strengthening within you a fondness, a taste for this mode of spending time, and will be forming a habit, which, before you are aware of your danger, will become so fixed and so powerful, that it will be almost impossible ever to break through its chains. If, then, you are now prompted, the moment you have a little time at your own disposal, to look around for some amusement, you are laying the foundation, let me tell you, of a habit of the most ruinous character. But you may say, this cannot be, because if the conduct be correct during that larger portion of the day,

which is devoted to regular employment, a habit will be formed, which will counteract the influence, which might otherwise result from our spending our leisure hours in an improper manner. In answer, I would say, that the influence of actions in the formation of habits, depends much upon the state of the feelings, upon the degree of interest, with which those actions are performed. Actions performed reluctantly, in obedience to another, or with feelings of indifference, will on that account, exert but little influence in forming and fixing habits. On the other hand, actions, which are performed with deep interest, will, from the interest which is felt in them, do much towards fixing habits. The influence then of one class of actions rather than of another in forming and fixing habits, will depend not upon the greater amount of time devoted to them, but upon the greater degree of interest felt in them. This you at once perceive, in learning any art where practical skill is desired. Take the art of writing as a familiar illustration. Two persons may write the same number of words, the hands may go

through the same motions, and yet the result may be widely different. One may engage heartily in the work, while the other enters upon it with indifference, perhaps with reluctance. You perceive, therefore, that you may devote ten hours a day to your regular employments, while you spend but three hours of leisure in idleness or in dissipation, and yet the habits will be more fixed, and the future character will be more determined, by the latter, than by the former; because the latter will be your voluntary course, the former may be a matter of reluctance. But enough has I trust been said to shew the importance of a right employment of time and especially of leisure hours during the season of youth.

Nearly connected with the right improvement of time is the choice of companions.—In this respect your situation is now much changed from what it was in boyhood. Then, your associates were too young to think much of what might seem to be your neglect of them. If they perceived that their advances towards intimacy or acquaintance were made with coldness and reserve, they were not disturbed by

it. They did not resent it, for they attributed it all to a parent's advice or a parent's command. But now they regard you as acting for yourselves, upon your own responsibility, and from the promptings of your own feelings. If, then, they perceive that you manifest no fondness for their society, they are disturbed, are ready to ask you the cause, and to resent what they regard as an unjustifiable neglect of them. Here then you are called upon to think, to weigh well the reasons which may influence you in your choice of companions, and, in your neglect of those who may seek your more intimate acquaintance. You will feel that you must no longer act from mere caprice, but that you should be guided in this by reason and principle.— And remember too, that should censure and reproach be cast upon you, you have now no one on whom you may cast the blame of your choice, that you are acting upon your own responsibility, and must yourselves bear the consequences of your conduct. Here then, you perceive, you are called to take a stand, to choose and act for yourselves, from the prompt-

ings of your own feelings, from the decisions of your own judgment, and with a willingness to bear yourselves the reproach which may be attached to your choice, should it be such as to bring upon you reproach. You are called upon, as you never have been before, to cherish a feeling of self-dependence and of self-confidence.

Nay, more. This feeling of self-dependence, you are to cherish, not only in regard to the choice of companions, but in regard to all things. When a child, how often have you said, or at least how often have you thought to yourself, 'I would not do this, I would not do that, if my parents had not commanded it'. And why? Because it was something calculated to expose you to the sneers and the laugh of your companions. Now that you are left to yourselves and have become, in a certain sense, your own masters, there will be great danger that you will be prevented from following out the convictions of your own consciences, through fear of the ridicule and sneers and laugh of your companions. You are therefore called upon

to act from high and honorable motives, in much self-reliance, in much independence of others. Do your companions laugh? And are you afraid of this laugh? And shall this always be so? This question you are now to determine, your characters in this respect you are now to form. If you lose your self-reliance, your independence and yield to this feeling now, there can be no calculation as to what your future character will be. You may be kind hearted and may have correct views as to all the proprieties of life. You may see and approve the right, and yet be always driven to the wrong, by your fear of the ridicule of others. The season of youth is then you perceive, in this respect, of the utmost importance to yourselves. You are now to commence the practice, that so you may lay the foundation for a fixed and controlling habit, of acting in all things from an unwavering devotion to principle, an unwavering regard to duty and to right, relying upon the approbation of your conscience to support you amid the sneers of your companions, should your conduct ex-

pose you to their sneers. This you have not been called upon to do, so fully before. Now then is the trying time. This is a season of the utmost importance. But, if you are only true to yourselves in your present practices, a habit will soon be formed which will prevent all future difficulty.

Still further, the season of youth is the season when your tastes and opinions are forming. And, as you well know, much of your happiness and much of the respectability and value of your characters will depend on the right formation of these. You have seen some who have acquired tastes for pleasures of a pure and an elevated character, the pleasures of reading and conversation and thought, and others who have acquired tastes for rough and boisterous merriment, and others still who have acquired the taste for hearing and telling news. These different tastes give the cast to character, and determine the kind of happiness which shall be sought, whether it shall exert a purifying, elevating and refining influence upon conduct or not. These tastes are generally formed

during the period of which I am now speaking. They are now within your power, under your control. It is for you to say, and to say it now what they shall be.

Then too as to opinions, you may think, that in regard to these, there is but little difference in the different periods of life. But it is not so. In childhood, you were not capable of forming valuable opinions. In manhood you will find that your opinions will be shaped and colored by the habit, which during the season of youth, you have established, as to the manner of forming your opinions. By this I mean that, during the season of youth you will form a habit of making up your opinions in one way rather than in another. For example. You may form the habit of making up an opinion at once, without examining evidence, and upon the impulse of the moment, or you may form the opposite habit, of examining evidence and weighing probabilities and carefully drawing conclusions. So too you may form the habit of changing your opinions with every varying breath, or of adhering to

them obstinately to the neglect of all reasons in their support, or of conscientiously regulating them by the preponderance of evidence. You may not indeed retain the precise opinions which you now form. But you will retain the same habit in regard to the manner of forming opinions. And this habit will do much towards determining the respectability and value of your future characters. You have often, I presume, seen men, who have been spoken slightly of, and for whose opinion no respect has been manifested. You have asked the reason of this. The answer has been, they are men of impulse, and of prejudice, and but little dependence is to be placed upon their opinions. And then you have seen others, whose opinions are always treated with respect, and who are often called upon by their fellow men to decide differences which have sprung up between them. And yet their talents and capacities were not superior to those of the class before noticed. But then they are men who have formed the habit of weighing and examining before deciding, and of govern-

ing themselves by the preponderance of evidence. The habits of the two classes, as to the manner of forming opinions, are different. And this is what constitutes the ground of difference in the respectability and value of their characters. Thus, you perceive, that in regard to the right improvement of time, the right choice of companions, the cherishing of feelings of individual independence and self-reliance, and the formation of tastes and opinions, the season of youth is of the utmost importance to yourselves.

There is one consideration which shews in a peculiarly striking manner the importance of this period. It is this. At this period, the character is actually in the process of formation, in all the respects which I have noticed. Whether you may be aware of this or not, whether you may be exerting yourselves to form it aright or not, still it is forming. In regard to the right improvement of time, for example, if you neglect to form correct habits in this respect, if you leave yourselves to be governed in the employment of your time, as the circumstances

around, or the impulse of the moment may direct, and cherish the thought that you are forming no distinct habits in this respect, you will find yourselves to have been most sadly mistaken. A habit will, during all this time, have been creeping over you, throwing around you its chains, and drawing them closer and closer. This habit has been forming in a gradual manner it is true, as all habits are formed, in an imperceptible manner, it may be, but none the less surely, none the less powerfully on that account. Your character then in this respect is in a process of formation during the season of youth, whether you are aware of it or not. And it is the same in regard to the proper choice of companions. If you neglect to exercise judgment in the selection of associates, those, who are idle and dissipated and always seeking for new companions and especially for companions whom they can direct and control, will seek your society and solicit your companionship. And as you have no particular reason why you should refuse, you will naturally yield to their solicitations. You

will become for the most part their associates. And then the virtuous and correct, regarding your frequent appearance with such as an indication of your tastes, will naturally withdraw from you, not wishing to intrude where they are not wanted. And thus, without any intention on your part, simply from your carelessness in this respect, you will have become the constant associates of evil companions. And so in regard to every part of your character. It is now forming, whether you attend to its formation or not. Should you be spared to middle age, your character will have become fixed. If you have thought nothing of shaping it aright before that time, you will then find that it is too late to hope for much alteration, to expect much improvement. My young friends, let this idea come distinctly before your minds. Your characters are now in the process of formation. It is now in your power, through the blessing of God, to say what those characters shall be; whether they shall be marked by vice and profligacy, or shall be adorned by all those virtues which give respectability

and secure happiness. The question with you, then, is not, whether you will hereafter sustain correct characters or have no fixed character at all. Characters, and fixed characters you will sustain, worthy or unworthy, good or bad. This you cannot help. The only question for you to determine is, whether these characters shall be good or bad, correct or incorrect. And this question you must determine by your practices now, while your characters are in the process of formation. This you will perceive upon a moment's reflection. Of what is character made up? It is made up of habits, of thinking, of feeling, of speaking and of acting. And of what are habits made up, how are they formed? By a constant repetition of the same acts. Suppose that now, on every occasion of the least excitement of feeling or of passion, you utter an oath. The repetition of this act will fasten upon you the habit of using profane language. And this habit will mark your future character, as being low, and ungentlemanly, as well as unchristian. If ever you rid yourselves of this habit, and clear

your characters of this stain, it will be only by a resolute and persevering effort. And even then, there will be danger, that a moment of sudden excitement of passion will bring you back to its use. Let it not then be forgotten that, how thoughtless soever you may now be, still your character is in the actual process of formation, that it is for you to say, and to say it now, not hereafter, not in middle life, not in old age, but now, during the season of youth, what that character shall be.

I am the more particular to press this consideration because I know that young men do not believe it, at least that they do not feel its truth and its importance. They feel that now they may be wild and gay and even, in some degree, dissipated, and yet that all will be well with them hereafter, when they shall have scattered the follies of their youth and entered upon the active business of life. Nay, more. There is sometimes a feeling cherished and occasionally even expressed, that the wildest and most thoughtless youth, will make the most active and enterprising man.

It sometimes happens that a dissipated youth reforms, becomes pure, correct and perhaps even distinguished. This being entirely unexpected, is noticed, and dwelt upon, and talked about, until, with many, the belief is current that such is the natural, or at least, the very frequent result.

But if a careful examination were made, it would be found that the number of these who reform is very small, when compared with the number of those who are ruined by their youthful dissipations. Then too, even these few are what they are, in after life, not because they have been dissipated, but because they have wept tears of bitter repentance, and have put forth struggles as for life, to recover themselves from their subjection to their dissipated habits. Still further, the conclusion is often too hastily adopted in regard to those who are supposed to have reformed. It often happens that a young man, who is dissipated or at least somewhat loose in his habits, reforms, enters into business, assumes the relation of husband, becomes a father and all appears to be well. This is

spoken of and referred to as an instance in proof of the position that dissipation in youth does not mar the prospect nor destroy the character of manhood. But, at length, he meets with difficulties in his business, is perplexed and disappointed and often knows not which way to turn. And then he returns to his dissipation, and his whole future course is blasted. This I say is often the case.

Let my counsel then, my young friends, sink deep into your hearts, that *now, that the season of youth* is to you the all important period of life, when you are to determine, and to determine for yourselves, what shall be your future characters.

And now my young friends, do you desire happiness? do you wish for respectability? would you secure the esteem of all around you? Remember that now is the time to lay the foundation for all these. Are you looking forward to the responsibilities of business? hoping for an elevation to posts of honor among your fellow men, or anticipating the sweets of domestic life? Remember that upon all these your present conduct

will exert an important and a lasting influence. Are you hoping to maintain hereafter, religious characters? to enjoy the guidance, the support and the consolation of the gospel? Remember that now is the most favorable time to establish your characters in these respects, that but few, comparatively speaking, who have cherished no religious impressions while young, have ever become devotedly religious in after life. And remember too, that those, who have become religious in after life, have found, by bitter experience, that they had only been treasuring up for themselves anguish and remorse. Do you my friends feel that the period, of which I am speaking, is thus important. Are you willing to read, reflect and enquire in regard to its duties and its dangers? Have you determined that you will endeavor to improve aright present time and present opportunities, that you will engage resolutely and at once in a course of self-cultivation?— If so, then I may hope that you will give heed to the counsels I am about to offer.

LETTER II.

THE TRUE OBJECT OF LIFE.

Recapitulation of the former letter—The prominent defect with most young persons is, that they have no clear and distinct views of the true object of life—The importance of clear views on the subject—it contributes to greater success and to greater happiness.—Happiness not the true object of life—but spiritual improvement — This appears from the constitution of our natures, and from the relations of life—Conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I addressed you in my last letter, on the importance of the season of youth to the individual himself, to his future character and future happiness. And I endeavored to show, from various considerations, that to you this is by far the most important period of life, because that, during this period, the formation of your characters, and the sources of your happiness are more entirely under your

own control, than at any other period of your life. My remarks, in my last letter, were of a general character. I am in this, and the succeeding letters, to speak of important, and I hope they may prove, interesting particulars. But where shall I begin? A vast field is before me, all unexplored and yet all interesting. I have wandered over this field, in thought, that I might select the most appropriate starting point. I have looked back upon my own former views and feelings. I have looked upon the young around me, and have endeavored to ascertain the point, in regard to which, there is the first and most important defect in the views and feelings of the young, the point in regard to which, the first suggestion should be whispered in their ears. And what, you are ready to ask, is the conclusion? I answer, that the first defect, in the views and feelings of the young relates to the true purpose of life, to the one supreme object of pursuit. In the first place, the vast majority of young persons have no distinct purpose, clearly defined in their own minds, and always promi-

ment, as the one great purpose to be accomplished by life. Suppose that I were to question each one of you, separately, and that you were to answer, each for himself, from the promptings of his own heart, without consulting each other, without knowing the answers given by others. Suppose I say, that, in this way, I should put the question, "what do you regard as the one supreme and all important object of life"? what are you now pursuing, as the one supreme object of your present efforts? what do you intend to pursue, as the one supreme object of the exertions of your whole earthly being? How many of you, do you suppose, would be able to give any distinct and definite answer?—Alas! I fear but few, comparatively speaking, very few, could do this. Need I ask you to pause and give diligent attention, while I point out to you the importance of having a clear and distinct view of the true object of life? Does not the bare suggestion of the thought bring up to your minds at once a full and realizing sense of its importance? Suppose your neighbor has chartered a vessel,

has laid in stores and provisions for a long voyage, and has loaded her with various articles of merchandize. The sky is serene and the wind fair, and you stand upon the wharf, as he is about to cast off. "But whither neighbor," you very naturally ask, "whither are you bound, and what is the object of your voyage." How are you filled with surprise as he answers, I am bound to no particular port, I am about to set forth upon a voyage, I shall sail east or west, north or south, to day in one direction, to morrow in a different direction, just as my fancy at the time may dictate, or the winds may favor. Whither I shall be wafted, or where I shall land, I know not. My object will be, to pass each successive day as pleasantly as I can, all unconcerned as to the question whether I shall be driven upon the breakers, stranded upon the shoals, or wafted to brighter lands and purer climes. Suppose, I say, that such an anomaly in the affairs of men should happen, would you not conclude that the individual was bereft of his reason, was laboring under some strange infatuation? And

yet is not this a true picture of the actual condition of many a young person? "Bound" as the Poet has it, "Bound on a voyage of awful length, through dangers little known," how utterly indifferent are many, as to the object of that voyage, or the port where it shall land them! They intend to pass each day, or each period of life as pleasantly as they can, but they have no clear idea of the object to be accomplished by the voyage itself. They move in one direction to-day, in a different direction to-morrow, just as the fashions of society, the temptations around them, or their own whims may dictate. I repeat the question, have I not given a true picture of the real situation of many a young person? You have indeed objects for the different periods of life, but have you any one supreme object, clearly defined to your own mind, always prominently before you, as the object of life itself? In regard to many of you, I fear not. And, if not, is there not much more reason than in the case supposed, to regard such a one as bereft of reason, as laboring under some strange infat-

uation? Pause then, I beseech you, pause ere it be too late, and fix in your minds some clear and distinct notions of the great object and purpose of life.

Again, you all know that some of the questions put to children, to call forth the lisping answers of their first efforts at speech, relate to the uses of the bodily powers, the purposes for which the different organs were given. You have all heard the mother, questioning her little prattler after this manner. "My dear, what are your eyes for?" "To see with," is the lisping answer. "What are ears for?" "To hear with." And thus she passes over all the bodily organs. Now, suppose we should carry this questioning, in regard to ourselves, a little farther, and ask what is the intellect for, what are the affections for, what is conscience for? What are the relations of father and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and neighbor, for? What in short, is life itself for? I fear that we should, many of us, find ourselves at a loss to give clear and distinct answers. And yet, is it not important that we should have

some clear and definite ideas as to the purposes for which all these are given, the right manner of employing and improving them, and the great object to be accomplished by the use of them? God, we have reason to believe, has created nothing, has bestowed no power, or faculty, in vain. All is created, all are given, for some purpose. On man is bestowed the power of studying the designs of God, of learning why powers and capacities are given, the uses and the one great object of life. And is it not important that we should study the designs of God, the right manner of employing and improving our powers and capacities, the true object and purpose of life? Pause, then, I beseech you, my young friends; pause, frequently, and ask yourselves, Why am I here? Why have I received intellectual powers, social affections and moral feelings? Why has life been given to me? Whither will it conduct me? And seek an answer to these enquiries, by the careful study of yourselves, of your relations, and of your natures, by a careful observation of the course of events and a careful study of God's word.

Still further, who, in regard to the ordinary transactions of life, meets with the greatest success, and makes the most progress? Is it not the man, who has the object of his pursuit distinctly defined to his own mind, an object which serves to concentrate all his thoughts and affections and efforts? I have seen young men, of apparently equal talents, equally ambitious of distinction, equally industrious; and yet one made much greater progress than the other. I have asked for the cause. I was satisfied that the difference was to be attributed mainly to the fact, that while one only desired distinction in general, the other had fixed upon the particular branch, or pursuit, or profession, in which he was determined to excel. The object of his pursuit was clearly defined to his own mind, and he had clear and distinct notions of the means by which that object was to be attained. The one was ever varying his course, seizing upon new studies, and engaging in new pursuits. The other was steady, regular and persevering; keeping his eye fixed upon his object, directing his attention, when

studies were at his own option, only to such as had a bearing upon this object, and extracting from every study to which his attention was directed, something which might serve to aid him in accomplishing his object. So it is in all the ordinary affairs of life. He, who has some one prominent object clearly defined to his own mind, as the grand object of pursuit, will accomplish much more, than he, who has not these clear notions of the object of pursuit. And, just so it is, in regard to the great object of life itself. He who has clear and distinct notions of this object, who understands why life was given, what is or ought to be, accomplished by the right use of life, who has fixed his eye upon this object with an eagle's gaze and pursues it with unwavering devotion, will accomplish much, very much, more than another, who is deficient in this respect.

But finally, who, I ask, is the happy man? Look around you, watch, observe, enquire; and say who is the happy man. See that young man; blessed, or perhaps I should say, cursed with patrimonial wealth. He is en-

gaged in no particular pursuit, feels no particular want, for the gratification of which, effort may be necessary; he has no one engrossing object of desire. He spends his days in seeking enjoyment from one pleasure after another. Is that young man, I ask, happy? The vacant stare, or listless languor of his countenance, the careless gait, the whole appearance of utter indifference, which marks the man, proclaim in language not to be misunderstood, that happiness is not his. Look again, see that old man. He began life with nothing, he has been industrious, prudent, upright and successful in business. He has passed through great and severe struggles.— He has long looked forward, with eager anticipation, to the time, when his accumulations would warrant him in the course which he is now pursuing, would authorize him to retire from the cares and the anxieties of business. But now that he has done so, is he happy? If you ask him, he will, with a sigh, give a negative answer. Ask for the reason, and he will tell you that he wants some object of affection, and thought and

pursuit; some object which may engross his desires, and call forth strenuous exertions.— In short, wherever you look, if you find a man without any particular, clearly defined and prominent object of pursuit, you will find an unhappy man. And what is true of the temporary objects of life, is doubly true of the great purpose of life itself. He who is devotedly pursuing the one great and true object of life, is supported under all minor and temporary changes; he is filled with happiness under all subordinate and temporary disappointments. And now, my young friends, permit me to address to you a few questions. Is it not reasonable to have some one great and prominent object of pursuit? Is it not important to know why we have been created? why God has given us the various powers which we possess? why we are? and what we are required to do and to become? Does it not promote progress, does it not secure happiness to have the object of our pursuit prominently before our minds, clearly defined to our thoughts? Have you thus endeavored to ascertain what is, with God, and

what should, with you, be the true object of life? Have you clear and distinct notions of this object, and of the means by which this object is to be attained? Are you permitting it to engross your thoughts and enlist your affections? If such be the case, then be exhorted to press onward in this course, resolutely and perseveringly. If such be not the case, if you have as yet no one prominent object of pursuit, an object for which you are living, the one true object of life, then pause where you are. You wish to derive profit from the letters which I am addressing to you from the volume put into your hands. Put down your finger then on this point, as the first and most prominent and most important question to be settled in your own minds. Be unwilling to go farther on in life, without understanding and devotedly pursuing the object for which life was given. Thus I have endeavored to meet one class of the young, those who have no distinct notions of the true purpose of life, who are living on, from day to day, without any one prominent object of pursuit.

But, in the second place, if the question proposed in the former part of my letter, the question as to the true object of life, were put, there would be found, among those who would feel prepared to give an answer, a great variety in the answers given. We may perhaps judge somewhat, of what these answers would be, if we look at the actual pursuits of men. Some are seeking wealth, with an apparently supreme and all absorbing devotion. Others are, in like manner, seeking distinction; others are seeking other objects, with all the apparent zeal, which would imply that these are the true objects of life, and the securing them the great purpose for which we were created. I might here expose the folly of devoting one's self to these temporary objects of pursuit. But I prefer to employ the remainder of this letter in exposing what I believe to be the root of the evil. I suppose that no one would acknowledge, for a moment, even to his own mind, that these, wealth, honor, pleasure, are to be regarded as the real objects of life. All would contend, that these are to be regarded, but as the means

to a higher and more important end; and all would contend, that it is only in this light of means to ends, that they are seeking them; all would say that they are seeking these several objects, because they regard them respectively, as the sources of happiness. Under this confession lurks the error I would expose. It is this, that happiness is the great object of life, the legitimate object of all our efforts; that "Happiness," as the poet has expressed it, "is our being's end and aim." This is the error I wish to expose, and yet I am aware that there is some little difficulty in the attempt, and that the distinctions made, in doing this, may seem to be distinctions without a difference. I have no doubt that God created us for happiness, and that all the laws which he has established, if rightly observed, and all the dispensations of his providence, if rightly improved, are calculated to promote our happiness. But this admission is very different from the assertion that we are to fix our attention upon happiness, as the object of pursuit. A parent, for example, as he looks upon his child, de-

sires that child's happiness. All that he does for the child, all the plans which he lays, all the directions which he gives and all the discipline which he may inflict, have reference to the child's happiness. But this is very different from saying that the child should make its own happiness the supreme object of pursuit. Suppose, for example, that there are set before the child all the delicacies of the table, all that can excite or gratify the taste. The happiness of the child, at the time, will consist in the gratification of the appetite. The parent prescribes the bounds of indulgence. But the child, with his limited knowledge of consequences, cannot but believe that his happiness is abridged by the prohibition. If you say to the child, seek your own happiness, make that the supreme object of pursuit, follow, without hesitation, every course, which will promote your happiness, you give him liberty to indulge his appetite to excess and to his own injury. You give him liberty to spend his time in play instead of employing it in healthful study. I am aware that some will say, you mistake us,

what we mean when we say that happiness should be the object of pursuit, is happiness in the long run. I know you say this. But this is in vain. What can the child know of the consequences of actions in the long run? He may have heard you tell of the future and distant consequences of actions, but he has not seen, he does not know, he can hardly believe, and yet, when a temptation assails him, it is as a child that it assails him, and he is to determine as he is, a child with only a child's knowledge, and if he makes happiness the object of his pursuit, it must be what appears to him to be happiness, not what you tell him is happiness. But, in regard to the child, you see the folly of making happiness the supreme object of pursuit. For if he does this, he must depend on his parents to point out the courses, which will produce happiness. Why not, then, cut the matter short at once, and direct the child to follow implicitly the directions of the father, in confidence that happiness will be the result of obedience? So it is with us, in regard to God. We are commanded to deny ourselves, to take up our

cross; we are required to love our enemies, to do as we would be done by. But we cannot, until after long experience, see that happiness is the result of these courses of conduct. At the very time when we are called upon to perform these various duties, they appear to us to be in opposition to our happiness. In short, he who determines to pursue, with unhesitating and unwavering devotion the rules and principles of the gospel, will often have to pursue courses, which give no hopes of happiness as the result. He may be assured, by his faith in the divine promises, that happiness will be the final result. But he has not seen it, he does not know it, nor can he see how this can be? It is only a matter of faith with him. And this is not the reason which influences him to pursue the course. He does this because it is required by the gospel and because he has an unwavering confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God and in the tendency of all his commands to produce final happiness. Those who prescribe the pursuit of happiness as the pursuit of life, are obliged to come back to the same point, and to urge

their followers to regard happiness as the result of certain courses, even where they cannot see that it is, where it must be mere matter of faith. But, when temptation assails us, it meets us as we are, as men with a limited knowledge of consequences. There is danger that it will overcome us, before we can bring up to the mind's eye, as living realities, the dim and indistinct visions of faith. Why not, here, as before, cut the matter short at once, and teach men to make it the rule of their lives to obey the divine will, with implicit readiness, in perfect confidence that the infinite goodness of the deity will cause that happiness near or remote shall be the result of obedience. This I am satisfied is the true, the proper course. And I am the more fully satisfied of this, because I think that my own experience and observation have confirmed my theoretical conclusions. I have seen those, who made happiness the object of pursuit, who were asking how will this or that course promote our happiness. But I never yet saw such a one happy, for any continuous period of time. I have seen others, who were ask-

ing what does duty require, what good can we do? And I have noticed that such, in whatever circumstances they were placed, were comparatively happy. It is with this, very much as it is with regard to health. There are some, who seem to make their own health and its promotion and preservation the one supreme object of thought and enquiry and effort; and such are, usually, in ill health. There are others, who press forward in the discharge of their duties, making health but a secondary object of enquiry; and such, if they are really blessed with no more health, enjoy that health much more than the class before alluded to.— So here, those who make happiness the object of pursuit, who are asking how they feel and what they enjoy in the various circumstances in which they are placed, will, in most cases, be miserable. Let this then, my young friends, be laid down as a fixed and unalterable principle, that happiness is not to be the supreme object of your pursuit, that you are to ask, not what will conduce to your happiness, but what duty requires. There may be cases, in which, of two courses, one will be as

much in obedience to duty as the other, while it bids fair to be much more pleasant—that of two situations, in either of which you will be in the path of duty and of usefulness, the one will be more pleasant than the other. In such cases, you are frequently right in pursuing that which bids fair to be the most pleasant.

But here, you will perhaps say, I have not come to the point. God cannot be said to have created us, in order that we may obey him, that this may be the rule, but that it cannot be the object of life. True I have not, as yet, reached the point. But I have taken this, as the most sure path of attaining it. Let it then be admitted, as all do admit, that the will of God is to be the rule of life. I say all admit this, for I believe that those, who regard happiness as the object, will admit that the will of God is the rule of life. What then, to come still nearer to the point, what is the true object of life, for what were we created? To this question I answer *our own spiritual improvement is the true object of life*, our happiness is the consequent, the attendant, upon this. The happiness of God,

if we be allowed to lift our thoughts so high, is the result of the perfection of his spiritual nature and holy character, the result of his purity, and holiness, and benevolence. I suppose that the highest happiness, of which man is capable, is the result, the consequent, the attendant upon the highest degree of spiritual elevation and purity and perfection to which he may reach. Our own moral and spiritual improvement, then, I regard as the one great object of life. I look upon this life as preparatory to another. I consider the formation of correct moral characters, the cultivation of correct moral feelings, and the development of our spiritual capacities, as the mode appointed by God for accomplishing in us this preparation, as the object for the accomplishment of which we are placed in this world, the object for which life was given, and capacities bestowed, and relations ordained.

I am confirmed in this position, by every view which I take, of human nature, and of the relations of life. In regard to human nature, if you look at the child, his first enjoyment consists in the exercises of the senses.

There is enjoyment in the exercise of these, and yet the result of this exercise is to strengthen, develope and improve the senses themselves, and to store the mind with the materials on which the intellect is to work, a knowledge of those qualities in the things and persons around, on which the affections are to fasten themselves. Soon the affections begin to manifest themselves. The child manifests love for its parents and for others around.—Then the intellectual powers begin to develope themselves. The child begins, in his own weak way, to reason upon the objects of its knowledge, to reflect, to compare and draw conclusions, as to the why, the how, and the wherefore. Then there are manifested the moral feelings, the dictates of conscience, and finally those higher, and purer and more spiritual capacities of the soul. By these, I mean the power of holding communion with things invisible, with God and our own souls, and an invisible world. In the simple exercise of all these various powers, there is pleasure. In the excessive or improper exercise of them all, there is danger. There is pleasure in the

gratification of the appetites, the exercise of the bodily senses, the exertions of the powers of motion. There is danger in the excessive gratification of the appetites, in the wrong appropriation of the affections in the improper direction which intellectual efforts may take. These various powers are nearly connected with each other. You perceive that the senses are the servants of the intellect and the affections; the affections and the intellect are the servants of the moral powers; the moral powers themselves, are the servants of the more spiritual part of our natures. The moral powers are exercised upon the knowledge gained by the intellect. The careful and correct exercise of the moral powers, the faithful performance of duties, promotes spiritual improvement, prepares the soul for a spiritual existence, and for spiritual joys. Thus, when I look at what man is by nature, I see all the parts of his nature subservient to the spiritual; when they are all rightly exercised and improved, they all serve to promote spiritual or in other words religious growth. And this view, abstract though it may seem, is of the

utmost importance, and of importance especially to you who are now in the early part of your life, and it is of importance that you should, now, while you are young, acquire clear and distinct notions of the relative position of the different parts of your nature, and should look upon all as subservient to spiritual growth, and upon spiritual growth as the one great object of life.

Then look at the relations of life. There are father and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, rich and poor, neighbor and friend. Is it not evident that, morally and spiritually speaking, we are improved by a right discharge of the duties of these relations? The affections are called forth and trained, we learn to bring selfish desires into subjection to benevolent feelings, to deny ourselves for the good of others; our own joys are increased by being shared by others, while their sympathy serves to alleviate our griefs. The result then, of a right performance of the duties of our several relations, is moral and spiritual improvement. Therefore, I say, that these relations were established for the purpose of promoting this

moral and spiritual improvement, and this, our own moral and spiritual improvement is the object to be sought in the midst of them all.

Look at the various duties and trials of life. It is your duty to be diligent and industrious; if you are faithful in the discharge of this duty, you will find yourself, morally speaking, improved. It is your duty to be temperate and benevolent; if you are faithful in the discharge of these duties, your own feelings will be benefitted, you will find yourselves, morally and spiritually speaking, improved. And so of all the duties of life. He who is faithful in the performance of them, will find himself morally and spiritually improved by that faithfulness. Therefore, I say, that the object of these duties, so far as we are concerned, is the promotion of our moral and spiritual improvement, and that this is the object which we should aim to accomplish by the performance of them.

So in regard to the situations and circumstances of life. Are you in prosperity? You have an opportunity for the exercise of benevolence. If you are faithful to exercise your benevolent feelings, you will find that they are

strengthened, and that your character is, in this respect, improved. Are you in adversity? You have a call to exercise the virtues of patience and cheerful resignation.— If you are faithful in exercising these virtues you will find your characters improved, and your souls benefitted. If then the natural consequences of the right performance of the duties arising from these circumstances is the promotion of our moral and spiritual improvement, may we not conclude that these circumstances were allotted for this purpose, as subservient to our moral and spiritual good?

So in regard to the relaxations and amusements of life; when of the right kind, and properly regulated, they all serve to promote moral and spiritual improvement. Therefore, I contend that the great and final object to be promoted is our own moral and spiritual improvement. So it is with all the doctrines, and all the ordinances of religion; when believed with a living faith, when observed with right feelings, they all serve to promote moral and spiritual improvement. If then I be asked why is life given? I answer, that we

might have an opportunity for spiritual training, for moral culture. If asked why relations are ordained, prosperity and adversity allotted? I answer, that by means of them we might promote our moral and spiritual growth. If asked in short what should be the one, great, supreme, all absorbing object of pursuit? I answer, it should be our own moral and spiritual improvement. This is the object of life, this the great end of earthly existence. I am aware that some may object to this. The answer in our old catechisms may be quoted in opposition, that "the chief end of man is to glorify God."—But how is God glorified? By the increased moral and spiritual improvement of his creatures, of his children. He then that would answer the chief end of his being and glorify God, must live for his own spiritual improvement. Another may say that the object of life should be to do good to others. I am aware that this is a very important duty, but I believe that God has so ordered, that this is but a means of our own spiritual good.

And here, my young friends, I would urge

upon your attention the view which I have presented. Here you are, in the midst of relations, exposed to trials and afflictions, and surrounded by duties. These are various, apparently conflicting and distracting in their claims. Select then as the object of life your own moral and spiritual improvement. This will serve to simplify all perplexity and conduct you safely through the labyrinth. I would urge it upon you to select this as the one supreme object of pursuit, on account of your own happiness, and your own improvement. I have carefully observed, my friends, what it is to be without any one supreme and engrossing object of pursuit, the object of a whole life. The individual is not indeed without objects of pursuit, but they are temporary and in them there is much liability to disappointment.—Is he seeking wealth as the supreme object of desire? He may be disappointed, and his disappointment will give him great pain. But, if he is seeking his own moral and spiritual improvement, he will indeed engage in business, and he may seek wealth, but these

will be secondary objects of pursuit, and, if disappointed, he will feel that the great object for which he is laboring, his own moral and spiritual improvement, may be promoted by a patient submission to disappointment, as well as by successful effort, in business. Then too, when disappointed, his disappointment, not relating to the essential interests of his soul, to the one supreme object of pursuit, will not leave that void in his affections, which it otherwise would. He will only feel that he has been disappointed in regard to some of the means, and not in regard to the object itself, which he is supremely seeking. I can assure you, that, if you will regard your own moral and spiritual improvement, as the supreme object of pursuit, it will sweeten the bitterest cup, which may be put to your lips; it will enable you to improve, for the highest and best purposes, the most broken, the most frequently interrupted and the most changeable life.

I urge nothing more, my young friends, than what you may, every one of you, undertake at once. Whether you are satisfied

in regard to the claims, doctrines and ordinances of religion or not, you can this day resolve that henceforth you will make your own moral improvement the great object of all your desires and efforts. And this I am the more desirous to see you do, because I would have young men start right—aim at a proper object; one which may be sought supremely; one which may be sought constantly, amid all changes and through the whole life. If you adopt this principle, you will be prepared to look from a proper and important point of view, upon the changes, circumstances and trials of life; upon its relations and duties; upon your own relaxations and amusements. Then will you, in all probability, be constantly progressing. Then will this life be the scene of much happiness as it passes, while it may become the foundation of much future felicity.

Remember then my young friends the instructions of my letter; that it is the part of reason, that it will promote improvement and secure happiness, to have some one distinct object of pursuit, clearly defined to your own

mind, as the one supreme object of desire and of effort, not for a day only, or a year, but for life. That happiness is not to be the supreme object of pursuit, that your own moral and spiritual improvement is well worthy of being regarded as the supreme object of desire and effort; and that this object is to be sought by a course of undeviating devotion to the will and commands of God.

LETTER III.

INDEPENDENCE OF CHARACTER.

Introduction—The necessity of independence of character shown. 1st. That we may bear up under evil report. 2d. That we may form opinions for ourselves and adhere to them although others may differ from us. 3d. That we may withstand the undue influence of organized and associated efforts—Mistakes upon the subject. 1st. It is a mistake to think that we must differ from all around us. 2d. It is a mistake to think that we have become truly independent when we have only exchanged masters. 3d. It is a mistake to think that we are truly independent when we are slaves to our own appetites—The true nature of real independence of character. 1st. Cannot be independent of truth in regard to opinions, nor of duty in regard to conduct—should try to be independent of every thing which would draw us aside from truth and duty—we may be led astray from truth and duty by the undue influences of our prejudices against those who differ from us—by the undue influence of our party attachments—by the undue influence of our own self-love—True independence of character consists in an entire and unreserved devotion to truth and duty—It is based upon a deeply seated, firmly fixed religious principle.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I have spoken in my two last letters of the importance of the season of youth, and have endeavored to point out the true object of life. But I have thought that even should you deeply feel the importance of this period—that even should you have correct ideas of the true object of life, and be desirous of devoting yourselves unreservedly to the pursuit of that object, you are in danger of being turned aside from your course, unless you cultivate true independence of character. I have noticed, also, that many, who seem to have felt deeply the importance of true independence of character, have fallen into strange mistakes in regard to its real nature and proper foundation.—I deem it of the utmost importance, therefore, at this stage of my remarks to urge upon you the importance of true independence of character—to point out some of the mistakes in regard to it, into which the young are most liable to fall, and to explain to you its real nature and its proper foundation. But in doing this I shall leave the epistolary form of address and simply lay before you the substance

of a discourse upon the subject, which I prepared sometime since, when called upon to address an assembly of young men.

1st. I am to speak of the necessity of independence of character. We are all, at times, called to pass through evil report. We are all exposed to the misrepresentation, reproach and censure of our fellow men. This misrepresentation and reproach may arise from two causes. There are those, who have become soured in their feelings. They cannot endure to hear of a neighbor's extending reputation or increasing success. They delight to put the worst construction upon all unfavorable appearances in conduct, and to attribute even praiseworthy actions to improper motives. When others speak in favor, they are heard to cavil, and, should they ever bestow praise, it is well seasoned with detraction, it is followed by some not merely qualifying remark, but by some clause of complete nullification to all that has been said before.

Again. There are those, who honestly and conscientiously misrepresent and reproach the conduct of their neighbors. For instance.

I may be perfectly sincere in my endeavors to do in all things my duty, according to the extent of my knowledge and the best of my ability. But in doing this, I must of course follow my own ideas of propriety. In these I may differ from every one around me. Consequently, my conduct will appear to my neighbors entirely different from what it does to me. And they, judging as they must from their own ideas of propriety, and representing my conduct as it appears to them, although honest and conscientious, may misrepresent it as it is in reality, and as characterized by the motives which gave rise to it, and by the principles by which it was regulated. Thus, in one or other of these ways, it frequently happens, that while we are pressing boldly on in the discharge of what we believe to be duty, supported and animated by the consciousness of our own good intentions, the whisper of suspicion is abroad, our conduct is misrepresented, our motives are suspected, our endeavors and good intentions are misinterpreted, and a construction is put upon all we do, injurious to our characters, destructive of our happi-

ness and withering to our hopes. Whether these evil reports arise from wilful misrepresentation or from honest misunderstanding, the effect on us is somewhat the same. In both cases we suffer, in the one from our neighbor's fault, in the other, it may be, from our own misfortune. In both cases we are in danger, either of becoming soured in our feelings, and of misrepresenting in our turn the conduct of others, or of sitting down in the utter hopelessness of despair, oppressed with the feeling that we are alone in the world, that every man's hand is against us, and that, let us do what we will, all is and must be wrong in the eyes of our neighbors. In both cases we shall feel the necessity of true independence of character to support us under such heart withering trials.

Still further, we may be situated among those who have formed their opinions on various subjects upon a model revolting to our feelings, who have embraced views that appear to us erroneous, and not only erroneous but dishonorable to God and injurious to man, views which we could not embrace if we would,

so incongruous do they seem to the eye of our reason, and so contradictory to the instructions of scripture, views which, if we will be honest and faithful to the convictions of our understandings, we must openly and decidedly reject. Yet if we do honestly renounce these views, and openly declare our convictions, the persons, whom we respect and esteem, and whose good opinion we wish to retain, will cast us off. We shall be censured, condemned, pointed at with the finger of scornful suspicion, yea, marked out and avoided as the pests of society. Let me here be fully understood. I am not speaking in reference to any particular class of men. My remarks are general and I do sincerely believe will apply, in a greater or less degree, to all classes. Here too, as before, we shall be in danger of becoming censorious or of yielding to despair. We shall feel the need of some principle more permanent and more powerful than the simple impulses of our nature, the need of true independence of character to animate and encourage us in our walk.

Once more. This trait of character seems

to be peculiarly necessary at the present time. There are circumstances in the moral, the political and the religious world, which require of every one a more than ordinary exercise of true independence. I allude to the propensity which all must have noticed, for union of effort, combination of forces, concentration of exertions. At the present day, whatever is attempted, must be effected by means of well organized, closely connected and widely extended associations. It is not enough that a person is engaged in the cause, is willing to labor, choosing at the same time to regulate his labors, in accordance with his own ideas of propriety and expediency, he must form his plans and govern his exertions by the rules of some generally adopted system. Are you willing to exert yourselves in the cause of temperance or to labor for the advancement of religious education, while you prefer to be guided in your exertions by such rules as you may consider best adapted to your peculiar circumstances and wants? All this is not satisfactory. You must connect yourself with, and conform yourself to, some party, sect or association.—

These parties, sects and associations may be, they undoubtedly have been attended with highly beneficial results. But they are attended also with their dangers. In our associated and combined capacity, we are in danger of forgetting our individual responsibility. We approve or condemn, not according to our own private judgment, but according to the opinion of those with whom we are associated.— We think and feel and act, not as individuals on our individual responsibility, but as parts and members of incorporated bodies, and we are ready to go forward and engage in courses of conduct to promote the purposes of a party a sect or an association, upon which, in our individual responsibility, we should never have presumed to venture. Nor is this all. We forget that these organizations are, at best and when successful in their operations, only means, merely expedients for accomplishing desirable objects, and that others, who adopt entirely different means, may desire as much, and labor as faithfully as we can to effect the same good objects. In this forgetfulness, we condemn those who differ from us in regard to means

as opposed to us in principle. Upon the subject of intemperance, for example, all who will not adopt our plans, who will not sign the very paper we have signed or one similar to it, are classed among the abettors and encouragers of intemperance, although intoxicating drinks may never have passed their lips, though their whole influence may have been on the side of total abstinence. In such a state of things, is there not required a good degree of independence of character to enable a man to go boldly yet calmly forward, in the path marked out by his judgment and his conscience, when that path may depart widely from, or be in direct opposition to the courses pursued by the combined associations of his fellow men? Must not a man have well proved his own work, to be able, under the censure, not of one individual only, but of united bodies of his fellow men, still to have rejoicing in himself alone.

2d. I have spoken of the necessity of true independence of character. I am next to notice some of the mistakes to which we are exposed in regard to it.

And first: are not those laboring under a mis-

take, who think, that, to be truly independent, they must differ from all around them, and that to manifest their independence, they must, on all occasions, oppose the opinions, express a contempt for the practices, and exhibit an utter disregard for the feelings of others. And are there not some such in society? Have you not seen them? Men who in their investigations have sought not so much for truth as for arguments to authorize a rejection of, or to support an opposition to the opinions of others; men who seek not so much to be satisfied in their own minds, as to convince those around them of their independence, and who, if those around them should embrace a certain opinion, would consider that circumstance of itself as a sufficient reason why they should reject it; men, who in their conduct affect a singularity of manners and assume an oddity of deportment, lest their conformity with the usages of society, should be considered as servile imitation, and who, in their social intercourse will not hazard their reputation for independence, by manifesting the least regard for the feelings of others, but who, on the contrary, will take partic-

ular pains, in whatever company they may be, to express just those ideas and to express themselves in just that manner which is calculated to injure the feelings of that particular company. They may be kind hearted and well disposed, men who would make any exertion and undergo any privation to render needed assistance or to soothe the wounded feelings, provided it could be done without endangering their reputation for independence. When you speak of them you say they are examples of an unaccountable inconsistency of character. But may not this inconsistency be accounted for? May not this kindness be attributed to the good impulses of their nature, while their unfeeling harshness and singular oddity are to be laid to the charge of the false notions they have imbibed? And under the influence of these false notions are they not in danger, while laboring for true independence, of becoming slaves to an affected oddity.

Again: are not those laboring under a mistake, who think that they have become truly independent, simply because they have ex-

changed masters. For instance, there is no class to whom the idea of becoming entirely independent is so pleasing as it is to the young. In their eyes there is something noble and manly and well calculated to convince the world that they are no longer children, in throwing off the restraints of early life and in breaking through the prejudices of education. Consequently, they despise the admonitions of age, they set at nought the cautions of experience, they disregard the voice of wisdom, and think that, in doing this, they have become truly independent.— They would be thought to have escaped from the leading strings of prejudice, and to have begun to think and act for themselves. But it is not so. They have only thrown off the kind restraints of their fathers, that they may subject themselves to the galling yoke of their associates. What hurries them into wild excesses? What plunges them into the destructive whirlpool of dissipation? What leads them the rounds of giddy thoughtlessness, or encourages them to venture upon the unsatisfying foothold of skepticism?—

What, but a servile regard to the opinions of their young companions, a slavish desire to stand well with their associates, to receive their caressing attentions, and to be flattered by them as noble and manly and truly independent? But my young friends, you are mistaken. You may perhaps, over your cups of dissipation, in seasons of jovial merriment and noisy revelry, at such times, you may, perhaps, acquire a false independence. You may laugh at the thought of duty. You may amuse each other with the stories you tell of the anxiety you are causing your fathers. You may sneer at the thought of tamely submitting to the whims of maternal solicitude. All this you may do and, in doing it, may think that you are manifesting your independence. But it is not so. On the contrary, you manifest only a want of independence. You do all this because you dare not do otherwise. For, there are moments of solitude, when the thought of your parents, the thought of duty and the uneasiness occasioned by the reproaches of conscience, come over your minds with a power that can-

not be resisted, and force from you the wish that you possessed courage to break away from your evil associates and overcome your bad habits. Yet you dare not, in reliance upon the approbation of your own consciences, say to your companions, "the course of dissipation, which we are pursuing, is injurious to our characters, is destructive of all mental and moral energy, causes the unhappiness of the fathers and mothers who have watched over our infancy, and who are even now shedding the tears and pouring forth the prayers of parental affection and solicitude, and finally is entirely inconsistent with what conscience teaches to be duty, therefore, I for one, can join you no longer." You dare not do this, because you fear the scorn, the laugh, the jeering and taunting reproach of your associates in folly. Tell not then of your independence. You know not what it is. You have only exchanged a parent's care for a master's command.

The same mistake is often made in regard to religious sects, and political parties. We have been educated it may be in the princi-

ples of a certain denomination. Those principles have become with us the strong and deep seated prejudices of education. At length, we feel that it is degrading to be governed in affairs of such moment by prejudice alone. This is a proper and a salutary feeling. It should lead us to examine the grounds of these prejudices. But, if dissatisfied with them, we should not dismiss them at once and set ourselves loose upon the ocean of doubt. We should still hold fast to them, until by faithful examination we have discovered and are able to substitute something better in their place. But this, I fear, is not the course usually pursued. I fear that we are too apt to renounce the principles in which we have been educated, not because we have examined them and found them false, but because our first impressions in regard to them were derived as they must have been from early prejudice; and that we embrace different views, not because we have examined them and found them true, but because some new prejudice has proved more powerful than the old. We think that we man-

ifest a great degree of true independence of character in our disregard of the opinions and our indifference to the reproaches of our former associates. But it is not so. We have only exchanged masters and have become slaves, perhaps still more abject than before, to the opinions of companions. We have not proved our own work, we still have our rejoicing in others and not in ourselves alone.

Still further, are not those laboring under a mistake, who think that they are truly independent, because they can preserve an entire indifference to the opinions of their fellow men in regard to certain particulars, while in these very particulars they are slaves to some powerful habit or strong propensity of their own? Such men there are. Such men you have seen, men who have formed particular habits, or indulged particular propensities, until it became difficult for them to conform to rules of propriety and custom. Gladly would they conform to the practices of their fellow men, in order to secure their esteem, could it be secured at what they

would deem a reasonable rate. Readily do they, in other particulars, vary their conduct to conform to the customs of society. But in regard to their favorite indulgences, their besetting sins, indolence and love of self-gratification magnify the labor of breaking off their habits, and checking their propensities, into an insurmountable task. They hesitate to undertake it. Yet they are unwilling to acknowledge, even to their own minds, the real cause of their aversion to change. They choose to cloak their indolent self-indulgence under some more honorable name. They call it a noble independence, an entire disregard to the opinions of their fellow men. They desire to be called by others truly independent. But it is not so. They are willing slaves to their own propensities. Such are some of the mistakes to which we are exposed. Others might be mentioned. But it is not necessary. I hasten then to speak of the true nature and proper foundation of real independence of character.

3d. And first I remark that there are some things of which we cannot be entirely inde-

pendent. We cannot be entirely independent of truth in regard to opinions, nor of duty in regard to conduct.

In regard to opinions; we are so constituted, that, when a proposition is presented to the mind, and the evidence for and against it has been examined, that proposition appears to be either true or false. This appearance may correspond with reality or not. It may depend on the degree of evidence presented, or on the state of mind in which the proposition is examined. But, on whatever it may depend, and whether it correspond with reality or not, it commands either our assent or our dissent. And the decision we make, is entirely above and beyond the control of the will. We must, whether we will or not, believe that two and two make four. We cannot, how much soever we may desire it, convince ourselves that two and two make five. In such a case it is in vain to talk of being independent of these decisions of the mind. They are formed in accordance with the laws of our nature, and as long as our natures remain the same, we must submit to them and abide by them.

It is in some degree the same with propositions which depend on probable evidence. We may, for example, be called upon to act as jurors in a criminal prosecution. The accused may be our friend. We may wish to see him acquitted. We may resolve that we will be independent of the convictions of our mind, that we will stand firm in his favor.—These, our wishes and our resolves, will indeed have an effect on our minds. They will operate to magnify the circumstances that are favorable to the accused and to diminish the force of the evidence against him. Still, if on trial the evidence be such that we cannot resist the conviction of his guilt, it is in vain to talk of our independence. We may indeed *act* as we please, we may prove reckless to truth and to duty. We may acquit or condemn. There is a possibility in these things. But that we should be entirely independent of the convictions forced upon the mind by the evidence presented, is an impossibility. We cannot, even if we act in this way, make the course appear right. It is the same with regard to a proposition in morals or a doctrine

of religion. I may sincerely wish to believe that a certain doctrine is true. I may think that it would promote my temporal and eternal happiness to embrace it with a living faith. Still, as long as that doctrine appears to the eye of my reason false, I cannot embrace it. My wishes and hopes and fears may greatly affect my mind in regard to the reception of evidence, but they cannot render it independent of the convictions of truth. I do not say that our convictions will always be in accordance with truth. But I do say that they will always be in accordance with what appears to the mind to be truth. And I do say, still further, that, as long as these convictions are forced upon the mind by the evidence presented, we must abide by them. I may have embraced what appears to you to be a soul-destroying error. Yet, as long as it appears to my mind to be truth, so long I must adhere to it. Do you wish to convince me that my opinions are erroneous? Your duty is plain, not to threaten and intimidate, but simply to increase my knowledge and to strengthen the evidence, or to change my feelings so that I

may look upon the same evidence through a different medium. For let us ever remember that in regard to opinions, upon subjects where we examine, we cannot be independent of truth or of what appears to the mind to be truth.

Again: in regard to conduct; we cannot be entirely independent of duty. For duty is imposed upon us by obligations arising from the natures given to us and the relations which we sustain, and consequently, unless we can rid ourselves of these natures and these relations, we cannot escape the obligations of duty. Let me illustrate. You are a son, and as such, you sustain a certain relation to your parents. From that relation results the obligation to perform towards them certain duties. Those duties will derive their peculiar character from the nature you have received at the hands of God; from the circumstance that you have been created an intellectual and moral being. As long then as this nature and this relation remain the same, as long as you retain the exercise of your mental powers, moral impulses and social affections, and continue to

sustain the relation of a son, so long it is in vain to talk of being independent of the duties which devolve upon you as a son. Nothing but your loss of the power to perform these duties, or the death of your parents, can release you from your obligations. You may perhaps come out boldly and say that mankind have been in a mistake upon the subject, that their notions are all mere whims, and that you will shew yourselves independent by paying no regard to them. You may say that no other affection is to be cherished, and no other duties to be performed towards your parents, than towards the veriest stranger you meet.— In this way you may talk. In this way you may attempt to act. But you will not succeed. You cannot carry your principles into practice. There will be a voice from within, soft indeed as the gentlest whisper, but all powerful to restrain you. There will be a voice from without, breaking forth from all around you like the roar of mighty waters, with a force that cannot be resisted. There will be a soul-penetrating and an awe-striking voice, though it be a voice of love from that Being whose eye

is ever upon you, a voice that will teach you that it is in vain to think of being independent of your duty. I have illustrated the principle. But permit me to dwell on this important point a moment longer. For it is on this point that our young men are most in danger. They think of being independent of truth and duty. There is something in our political institutions, there is something in the religious liberty we enjoy, the liberty to be any thing or nothing in regard to religion, the liberty to follow with superstitious reverence some wild fanatic, or to embrace with equal servile acquiescence, the monstrous doctrines of modern infidelity, there is something in the long continued and often reiterated praises of liberty and independence, which are heard in all our political caucuses, and at our public celebrations, and which are seen in all our periodical publications—there is something I say in all this, calculated not only to interest but to mislead the young. They are excited upon the subject. They delight to talk of the spirit of free enquiry that is abroad, of the spirit of fearless independence which is manifested in

breaking time-hallowed prejudices, in throwing off soul-goadings chains that have been rusting from all antiquity. They wish to stand forth as examples of this spirit of free enquiry and fearless independence. And they think to carry their "free enquiry and fearless independence" to an utter disregard of all truth and duty.

And then too, the youth goes forth from the parental roof at the most dangerous period of life. He becomes the member of some collegiate institution, enters the counting room of the merchant, or is placed as an apprentice with some mechanic. These different situations in some degree resemble each other in regard to the circumstances which render them scenes of danger to the young. In them all, they are, during most of the day, confined.— And in them all, there are seasons of leisure. These seasons of leisure they will not spend in idleness. For they are full of life and activity. Nor will they spend them in solitude. For they are at the age when the heart is most tender and susceptible. They will spend them in each other's society, and in so doing they

become strongly attached to each other. They often assemble, and when together, the ride is proposed, the supper is resorted to. In this way they go on, hand in hand, from one step to another, until, before they are aware of it, they are far advanced on the downward road of dissipation. But here it may be that the thought of home, of parents, of brothers and sisters, once the objects of heartfelt affection, excites uneasiness. The reproaches of conscience and the pangs of remorse produce unhappiness. Some one less hardy than his associates begins to falter in his course. He is rallied by his companions, he is reminded in scornful reproach of his mother's apron strings to which he is tied, and of his father's rod, or his frown, which he fears. He is told what a mere child he makes himself, and what a man he is capable of becoming and ought to become. Or it may be that he is laughed at as one in danger of becoming pious, is saluted with the mock title of priest, is asked to hold forth, is ridiculed as a poor faint-hearted timid youth, that is afraid to do wrong, afraid of a hell and a devil. In this way the feelings of

the youth become excited. He becomes ashamed of the better impulses of his nature, ashamed to acknowledge that he is troubled by a sense of duty, by a regard to conscience, by the thought of parents and friends. He is afraid to break away from his dangerous associates. He adopts their principles, and begins to think it manly to set at defiance the dictates of conscience and the obligations of duty.—He gives up all regard to right and wrong, plunges headlong into further dissipation, in order to stifle present uneasiness, till at last he is ruined. I am not indulging a disordered imagination. I do not present you with a picture which has no corresponding reality. Let those who have been ruined by dissipation speak, and many of them will tell you that the first object of the vicious associates among whom they fell, was to break down all regard for a father's wish or a mother's affection—to laugh out of existence all sense of duty, to excite such feelings of independence, as should free them from all qualms of conscience. Can you think it strange then, that I wish to press the idea, that we cannot be independent of

duty, and especially to enforce this truth upon the young. To the youth, and to every one I would say, you are the children of Almighty God, created, supported and blessed by his goodness. Here then is a relation which you sustain towards the Being who gave you life and continues you in existence. From this relation results the obligation to perform certain duties, the duties for example of honoring your heavenly father, by endeavoring to promote the intellectual and moral improvement, and the highest possible happiness of his rational offspring, and by manifesting in all things a regard to his will. Can you be independent of the duties which result from this relation? Will you, when a course of conduct is proposed, concerning which, the question arises in your mind, whether it be right, whether it be in accordance with the will of God and well pleasing in his sight, at such a moment will you say, I am determined to follow my own propensities and inclinations? I care not whether the course be right or wrong, I care not for the will of God, I will shew my manly independence by manifesting an utter

disregard for any such whimsical superstition! Stop, my friend,—stop! Tell me, are you willing to renounce the relation from which that obligation results? Are you ready to say, that from this moment you wish for no further support, no further blessing from your God? Shall the Almighty take you at your word and instantly withdraw his supporting hand, and turn away his life-giving countenance from you? The very thought is startling. Say not then that you will slight these obligations, that you will neglect these duties, that you will be independent; for there is no such independence in nature.

Again, I would say to every individual, you are created intellectual and moral beings, you are blessed with reason and conscience. This is the high privilege of your natures. From this privilege results the obligation to perform in regard to yourselves, certain duties; the duties for example, of cultivating and improving the powers bestowed upon you, and of keeping yourselves unspotted from moral pollution; the duty, to speak in more general terms, of regulating your conduct at all times and under

all circumstances in accordance with the voice of reason and the dictates of conscience.— From these obligations you cannot escape; of these duties you may not be independent.— For surely you will not give yourselves up to animal and sensual indulgences. You will not cherish the low and grovelling propensities of your nature, and tamely surrender yourselves slaves to the appetites of the flesh, and then pretend to justify yourselves by calling this true independence of character! You will not pretend that the idea of a conscience is a popular superstition! that you are about to shew yourselves above such narrow-minded prejudices! You cannot do this, for the gnawings of inward anguish of spirit will convince you by sad experience, that the remorse of the guilty soul is not a mere priest-created bug-bear to frighten the timid. But it may be that you are unwilling to exert yourselves in the improvement of your powers; that you care not to exercise the self-command, and self-discipline, and self-cultivation which reason and conscience require. But are you willing to give up the high privilege of reason and

conscience, that you may indulge your animal propensities, to sell your birthright for a mess of pottage? Are you ready to go forth from among your fellow men, to step down from your elevated rank, and take your place by the side of the beasts of the field, and become like one of them? Presume not then to expect to escape with impunity, if, while you possess reason and conscience, you disregard their dictates, and by animal indulgences brutify and degrade your souls. Tell me not that this is manly independence, a noble disregard of the fears and whims of bigotry and superstition; tell me not of an independence which frees you from your duty to yourselves, for reason allows of no such independence.

Still further, I would say to every individual; you are blessed with social natures, and you sustain widely extended and variously complicated social relations. You are parents or children, brothers or sisters, husbands or wives. You live among the poor and among the rich, among the ignorant as well as the learned, among the vicious as well as among the virtuous. You live among men of different re-

ligious and political principles. All these relations among men give rise to corresponding reciprocal duties. These duties are often very complicated and delicate in their nature, and very difficult in performance. And here, as every where else, we cannot be independent of the duties imposed by the peculiar relations we sustain, and the particular circumstances in which we are placed.

But here, perhaps, you are ready to ask if independence of character be not after all a mere name; are ready to exclaim, if we cannot be independent of truth and of duty, what is there left of which we may be independent? I answer that we may and that we ought to be independent of every thing that would hinder our discovery of truth, or lead us astray from the path of duty. And surely there are sources of danger. Let us notice some of them.

We may be prevented from discovering truth, or turned aside from the path of duty, by the undue influence of those who differ from us in practice, or are opposed to us in opinion. The danger here is not that we shall be led to

embrace their opinions or adopt their practices. It is that under the influence of our prejudices against them we shall be unfitted for impartial examination, and shall be driven to the opposite extreme. For example, we may have become warmly attached to some religious or political party, and strongly prejudiced against all that is opposed to us in religion or politics. Every opinion, which those opposed to us may embrace, is from that very circumstance, considered as strongly tinged with error, and we think ourselves perfectly safe, perfectly sure of the truth, if, even without examination, we reject that opinion and go to the opposite extreme. Is a book put into our hands written by a member of an opposite party? We may read the book, but we are in danger of doing it with the veil of prejudice upon our minds. We shall read with the strong expectation of finding much that is objectionable. This expectation may be natural, but we should guard against its undue influence, lest we see faults where otherwise we should not have discovered them. For we all know that a book is read with far different

feelings, and a far different judgment is passed upon its contents, when the author and especially the party to which he belonged, are unknown, from what would have been the case had it been known that he was a member of an opposite party. The same words and sentences and paragraphs, which, while the author is unknown, are thought to be filled with patriotism or piety, change their appearance at once upon the mention of his name, and become treasonable or heretical. In this way we are unfitted by our prejudices for impartial examination. And the same is the case in regard to conduct. If those who are opposed to us in religion or politics, contend strenuously for or against any course of conduct, we are inclined to contend strenuously for or against the opposite course. You perceive therefore, that we are in danger of being prevented from discovering truth or turned aside from the path of duty, by the undue influence of our prejudices against those who differ from, and are opposed to us. This undue influence the truly independent man will carefully guard against. He will seek for truth with a mind

unbiassed by prejudice, and will embrace it wherever he may find it. He will follow duty wherever it may lead him, whether in company with the members of his own or with those of an opposite party.

Again, there is an undue influence arising from the party with which we are connected and the friends with whom we associate. We connect ourselves with certain religious and political parties, because in most important particulars we agree with them in opinion. Still in many things we have our individual preferences. And it is our intention not to sacrifice individual freedom of thought upon the altar of party union. Yet such is the imperceptible influence of party sympathy, that before we are aware of it we find ourselves approving, simply because the party approves. It may be that the party with which we are connected, have followed out their original principles to dangerous conclusions, or have changed their position and embraced new views, views too in which we cannot coincide with them.— Or it may be that in their practices they have departed from what we believe to be a correct

course of conduct. At first our feelings prompt us to speak out, to separate ourselves from our party, to act in individual independence. But we are checked by our unwillingness to forfeit the approbation of our associates. Nor can we examine and judge, in order to determine upon the course which it is proper for us to pursue, without an undue bias in favor of the principles and practices of our party, without at least a wish and a strong wish too, to find all things fair and proper. Here too you perceive we are in danger of being led astray from truth and diverted from the path of duty. Against this undue influence the truly independent man will ever carefully guard. He will seek for truth and he will follow duty even though they should lead him into courses widely diverging from those pursued by his party.

But, still further, there is an undue influence arising from ourselves, which is calculated to draw us aside from truth and from duty. And this, it appears to me, is the greatest source of danger. We are not so liable to become slaves to others as we are to ourselves, to our own propensities and habits and feel-

ings and opinions. There is a fear of being called inconsistent, a desire of being thought sound in judgment, an unwillingness to acknowledge that we have been in error, which operates unfavorably upon all our investigations. We may have formed our opinions in haste, after an imperfect and partial examination, without having considered all their bearings, or traced out all their consequences. But, when greater light breaks in upon our minds and stronger evidence is set before us, it is with reluctance that we admit the light and yield to the evidence. It is the same in regard to conduct. We are strongly inclined to look favorably upon the practices to which we are addicted, the habits which we have formed and the propensities which we have indulged simply because they are our own. We continue in them, partly it may be, because it is difficult to break them off and to exercise self-government, but more especially, because it is wounding to our pride and self-love to acknowledge, by a change in conduct, that we have been yielding to improper indulgences. We should then strive to be independent of

ourselves, of our propensities, our prejudices and our habits; and not suffer them to lead us astray from truth and from duty.

Here then I draw my conclusions. Here I answer the question "what is the true nature and proper foundation of real independence of character." And my answer is this. The true nature of independence of character is a sacred, an inviolable and a conscientious regard to truth and duty. Its proper foundation is in deeply seated, firmly fixed and all pervading principle. Yea, I may not refrain from adding, in deeply seated, firmly fixed and all pervading christian principle. For as a herald of the christian religion, and addressing as I am the members of a christian community, I may not refrain from reminding you, that, in the enjoyment of gospel light, and gospel ordinances, you are favored with the highest privilege which man can enjoy. And a privilege too, which gives rise to duties that extend through all the relations of life, and furnish employment for the highest capacities of the soul. With the Bible in our hands, with the christian religion as our guide, we are

placed in a new relation. Our duties become christian duties, based upon and supported by christian principle. And as we may not be independent of the duties which arise from any relation we sustain, so, with the Bible in our hand, we may not be independent of christian principle. There is no sure and stable foundation for true independence of character but this. All else is uncertain and will prove deceptive. But here we are guided by a supreme regard to the will of God as the standard of duty, which is ever fixed and unchangeable. Would you then, my young friends, have before you a very plain and simple duty? It is this. Make yourselves practically acquainted with the principles of the christian religion. Under the influence of these principles, go resolutely forward in the search of all truth and in the practice of all duty, and you will, even before you are aware of it, have become truly independent. You will not ask whether you are independent or not, for you will be independent even of the desire to be thought independent. You will not think of this. You will become so engrossed by your

desire to discover truth and to practice duty, that you will be freed from a servile regard to the opinions and practices of others, or a slavish subserviency to your own prejudices, habits and propensities. You will manifest no harsh rudeness, no disregard of, or contempt for the opinions, practices and feelings of others. Nor yet will your angry feelings rise when assailed by reproach. You will only examine more carefully into your past conduct and opinions to see if there have been ground for reproach, and will endeavor to become more active, more cautious and more zealous in your future exertions. You will be led to sincere and earnest endeavors by the light of reason and of revelation to prove your own work each man for himself, that so you may have your rejoicing not in others but in yourselves alone.

LETTER IV.

CONSISTENCY OF CHARACTER.

Introduction—consistency of character defined and illustrated — It is consistency in purpose, intentions and motives, and may often require changes in opinion, changes in practice and changes in the denominational or party relations, which we may have sustained. He who boasts that he never changes his opinions, or alters his conduct, must be a man of small mind and of contracted views, and, if he practice according to his boast, his mind will ever remain small and his views contracted — Practical principles — 1st. We should cherish an enquiring activity of mind in regard to the various subjects, which may be presented for consideration. 2d. We should ever act openly, frankly and fully, according to our convictions at the time. 3d. We should ever keep our minds open to conviction. 4th. We should ever be ready to admit to our own minds and to acknowledge to others, that we have been in error—Two courses may be pursued upon this subject; we may seek to appear consistent to our fellow men, or to be so, in view of our conscience and our God—The former course a source of perplexity, the latter the source of inward peace and happiness.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

There is, I believe, in all, by nature a love of consistency of character, a desire to be thought consistent in all they do. To be inconsistent is held, by many, to be a disgrace. If an individual has changed his opinions, or altered his course of conduct, he is held up to the scorn of the community, as one who has been inconsistent with himself. And the individual, feeling that this change may subject him to reproach or to ridicule, will take great pains to prove that he has not been guilty of inconsistency.— Then too there are others, who have established a character for consistency, and have become so filled with the pride of consistency of character, that they will obstinately adhere to whatever opinions they may once have adopted and expressed, not because they still appear true, but because they have once adopted and expressed them; they will obstinately continue on in the pursuit of a particular course of conduct, not because they believe it to be right, but because they have once entered upon it and are now un-

willing, by a change, to appear to be inconsistent. This obstinate adherence to opinions once adopted, and to courses of conduct once commenced, simply because they have been adopted and commenced, is a gross perversion of true consistency of character, or rather an entire mistake of its true nature.— Since such mistakes are actually made, I have felt myself called upon to invite your attention particularly to the consideration of this subject. I wish to point out the proper foundation and the true nature of consistency of character, that so I may guard you, if possible, against the mistakes in regard to it, to which you are most exposed.

And first, the proper foundation of true consistency, as of true independence of character, is laid in an entire and unreserved devotion to truth and to duty; to truth in regard to opinions, and to duty in regard to conduct. In our devotion to these we may be consistent. But there is no true consistency of character in an obstinate adherence to particular opinions, or to particular courses of conduct. For example, you may be filled

with a sincere love of the truth. You may, under the influence of this love of truth, have carefully examined all the evidence, upon any particular subject, which may be within your reach, and you may have drawn your conclusions, and formed your judgments, according to the best of your ability. In this way you may have adopted certain opinions upon religious, moral, political and other subjects. But why have you adopted these opinions? Is it not because they appear to your minds to embrace and to express the truth? Suppose, then, that new light, upon these subjects be presented to your mind, that additional evidence, and evidence of a different character from any which you have examined, be discovered; that new arguments and considerations, opposed to your conclusions, arguments and considerations before unthought of by you, be suggested? What, under such circumstances, does consistency of character require? Will you close your eyes to this light? Will you banish from your mind all thoughts of this new evidence, these new arguments and considerations?—

And will you call this a consistent course of conduct? If so, you are mistaken. For your consistency must be a consistency of feeling and of purpose, and not a uniformity in results and appearances. You commenced under the influence of a sincere love of the truth. As long as this love of the truth is your governing feeling, you will hold yourself open to conviction. You will hold yourself ready to examine, carefully and impartially, any new evidence, any new arguments or considerations, and to yield to any new light, which may shine in upon your minds. If you do not hold yourselves thus ready to examine and to yield to evidence, you are not consistent with yourselves. You have acted, for a time, under the influence of a love of the truth. You are now acting under the influence of other and entirely different feelings. But suppose, still further, that, upon examination, you are convinced that your former opinions were erroneous, and that the courses of conduct, you have been pursuing under the influence of those erroneous opinions, were wrong. What does

consistency of character now require of you? Does it not require that you should change your opinions and alter your conduct? Most surely it does. If you do thus change and alter, you will be consistent with yourselves. You will be acting in obedience to the same principles and motives which influenced you at the commencement of your course.

Again, you commence your course under the influence of an unreserved devotion to duty in all your conduct. It is your desire to know, and your endeavor to do right in all things. In this you are strictly conscientious. But, in regard to your knowledge of what is right, you are influenced, as indeed all are, by the general condition and prevalent opinions of society around you. You engage in practices which are sanctioned by the voice and the example of the community. They are thought right by the community and you think them right, and therefore you engage in them. That my illustrations may be the more palpable and distinct, I will take a particular case. Suppose, then, that you have engaged in the traffic in ardent spirits. You are in-

fluenced by the desire to know and to do your duty. And you have engaged in this traffic because you honestly believe that it was not inconsistent with duty that it was right. But, as the attention of the community has been turned to this subject, as the consequences of this traffic have been observed, and as the arguments, by which it is justified, have been examined, many in this community have become convinced that this traffic is wrong, and ought not to be continued. And the men, who have been led to this conclusion, are, many of them, men of pure principles and of sound judgment, in regard to other subjects. Under such circumstances, what course does consistency of character require you to pursue? Will you shut your eyes to all light and close your ears to all argument upon the subject? And will you call this consistency, because you adhere to the same employment? Most surely you are mistaken. You commenced with a conscientious devotion to duty. This devotion to duty implies an earnest desire to know what is right, as well as a resolute determina-

tion to do what is right. The desire to know what is right implies a readiness to examine new arguments, to investigate new views, and to weigh new considerations.— Unless you pause, then, and examine the views and arguments of those, who consider the traffic in ardent spirits as wrong, you cannot claim for yourself consistency of character. But suppose you do examine, and that the result of your examination is that you are convinced of the impropriety of the traffic, or, at least, are led to doubt in regard to its propriety. What is now the course which consistency requires of you?— Will you adhere to the traffic, against your convictions, or in utter disregard of your doubts, and call this consistency, because you do not change your course of conduct? If so you are mistaken, utterly mistaken in your views of the nature of true consistency of character. Your business, your appearance to the community, is indeed the same. But is it the same to yourself, to your own conscience? Are your feelings and motives the same? Is your conduct consistent with

the purposes and intentions by which you were actuated at first? Most certainly not. You commenced with a conscientious devotion to duty, an earnest desire to know and to pursue the right. You engaged in this particular traffic because you believed it to be right. But now you continue on in your traffic, under the conviction that it is wrong, or, at least, while doubting whether it be right. Oh, how changed have you become, how inconsistent in your conduct with the feelings and intentions, with which you commenced your course. How would you then have started back, at the thought, that you should ever do what you might believe to be wrong, or that you should ever pursue a course of conduct, in regard to the propriety and correctness of which you might have strong and serious doubts.

Still further, you have connected yourself with some religious denomination or with some political party. Why have you done this? Has it not been, because, after the best examination you have been able to give to the subject and in the exercise of your

soundest judgment, you believe that the doctrines embraced by this denomination, or the principles adopted by this party, are true and correct. But, suppose that, upon further thought and reading, you are led to doubt the correctness of these doctrines and principles. What does consistency require of you? Will you obstinately suppress all doubts, and avoid all examination, and adhere to your opinions and principles? And in doing this are you not inconsistent with yourself? Are you not departing from the reasons, which influenced you at first? Most certainly you are. But suppose you weigh these doubts and examine the points to which they relate, and are convinced, by the process, that the doctrines are not true, that the principles are not correct. Will you retain your connection with this denomination or party, concealing your change, or contending that you have not in reality changed, that you have only adopted a new mode of explaining the philosophy of these doctrines and principles? And is this, I ask, consistent? Did you not embrace them because you honestly

and sincerely believed them to be true and correct in a sense entirely different from that in which you now hold them? Does not consistency of character require, then, that you should frankly and honestly admit to your own mind, and acknowledge to others, that you have changed? Does not consistency require, that you should leave the denomination or party, and no longer uphold, by your countenance and support, doctrines and principles in the truth and correctness of which you do not now believe.

I have thus given illustrations of the nature of consistency of character. And from these illustrations, I would draw the following conclusions: That consistency of character does not consist in an obstinate adherence to the same principles, the same opinions, the same courses of conduct, or the same denominational and party relations.— But that it does consist in a persevering adherence to the same purposes and intentions and motives. In other words, it consists in an unswerving devotion to truth in regard to opinions, and to duty in regard to conduct.

You may set forth in life as a young man, with a fixed determination that you will always embrace those opinions which appear to your mind to be true. This determination implies that you will carefully examine the opinions, which you do embrace, and that you will impartially weigh and consider all new views and new arguments and new considerations, which may claim your notice, and which may seem to be in opposition to your views, that you will not dismiss, at once any doubts which may arise, but will, under their influence, re-examine the grounds of your belief, and the reasons which have induced you to embrace the opinions which you hold. On this point then you may be consistent by adhering to this fixed determination to the same purpose and intention. But it may be, that the opinions, which you embrace now, will hereafter appear to you unsound and untrue. Adherence then to your intentions and purposes will require that you should renounce them and embrace those which do appear to you to be sound and true. I might perhaps state to you my pres-

ent opinions upon various subjects. But I cannot pledge myself that my opinions, one year from this time, shall be the same. I cannot in consistency, do this. I know not, but that my adherence to my motives and intentions, but that an unwavering devotion to truth, may compel me to renounce them.— My consistency of character consists not in obstinately adhering to the same opinions, but in ever adopting those, which, after careful examination, appear to me to be true.— It may be that the courses of conduct, which you are now pursuing, will hereafter appear to you to be wrong. Adherence then to your purposes and intentions, an unwavering devotion to duty, will require that you should alter your conduct. Your consistency of character must be manifested, not by an obstinate adherence to courses once commenced, but in ever pursuing those which you honestly and sincerely believe at the time to be duties.

True consistency of character then, consists in an unwavering devotion to truth and to duty in a persevering adherence to the

same purposes and intentions. It may not only admit of a change in opinions and an alteration of courses of conduct; it often may and often does require this change and alteration. Indeed, I do not believe it possible, for a man to maintain consistency of character and make improvement, without changing from time to time his opinions and altering his conduct. I know, indeed, that there are those, who will say, and will say it in a boast, that when they once form their opinions upon any subject, they never change; that when they have once adopted certain principles or entered upon a certain course of conduct, they never alter. But such an assertion, let it come from whom it may, denotes a small mind and exceedingly contracted views. And what is more, such an assertion, if adhered to, is a seal of perpetual ignorance, a bar to all further improvement. For what does such an assertion imply? Does it not imply that the individual supposes himself to be always and infallibly correct in his first conclusions? For if not, why should he be averse to change his opin-

ions and to adopt more correct conclusions? Does it not imply a feeling of self-confidence, which overlooks even the liability to error? For how can one, who feels that he is constantly liable to error, and especially liable to it in his first impressions and conclusions, say that he never changed an opinion once adopted? The assertion then, implies that an individual, who makes it, regards himself as infallibly correct in his first conclusions; a supposition which none, but a man of small mind and of contracted views, could ever make. Or, if the assertion does not imply this, it implies something still more derogatory to the character, and that is, an utter indifference as to the truth or correctness of opinions, which may be embraced, or the courses which may be adopted. No one, who feels his liability to error, and who seeks for truth, and desires to pursue the path of duty, can cherish feelings which would prompt the assertion that he never changes opinions or alters conduct. The assertion, of which I am speaking, if adhered to, will be an affectual bar to all improvement.

It is in vain for any one to say that he never draws conclusions until the whole subject has been examined. This cannot be. The subject is presented to the mind and we are called to act. Act we must, and from present appearances too, from the evidence presented at the time we must draw the conclusions, under which we act. And yet, it may be, that in a short time new evidence will be presented, and evidence which entirely changes the whole aspect of the case. You cannot expect then, to be perfect in the knowledge of the various subjects, in regard to which, you must, as you pass along, and without pausing for a full examination, form your opinions and shape your conduct. The only reasonable course then is to form your opinions and shape your conduct according to the extent of your knowledge, and the best of your judgment upon the evidence presented at the time, and then to hold yourselves ready to examine new evidence, to yield to new convictions, and, in obedience to these new convictions, to change opinions and alter conduct. That an adherence to

this assertion will prove to be a bar to all improvement, will appear from a single consideration. Suppose that a child, at the age of twelve years, should form the resolution that he will never change an opinion which he may then hold, upon any subject whatever. What, I ask, would be his improvement, should he adhere to that resolution. He might, indeed, form new opinions upon other subjects. But upon the subjects, upon which he had already formed opinions, would he not be prevented from improvement? And would not the general result of such a resolution be, to prevent all mental development, all intellectual progress? The individual might advance in years and increase in stature, but would he not exhibit the unpleasant appearance of a man, in age, stature and appearance, while a mere boy in knowledge and mental capacity? Such would undoubtedly be the influence of a resolution, like the one I have supposed, formed at the age of twelve years, and ever after adhered to. But suppose the resolution be formed at the age of twenty, would not the influence be the same in character, although it

might be diminished in degree. Suppose it be formed at the age of forty, or of fifty even, and still, I ask, would not the influence be the same in character? Would not the resolution serve to prevent all further improvement. Indeed, is there any age at which you fix the limit of improvement. To me it seems not. You perceive, therefore, that the assertion which I have noticed, and which is sometimes boastingly made, indicates that he who makes it is a man of a small mind and of exceedingly contracted views, and you perceive too, that if adhered to, it will tend to prevent the enlargement of his mind, or the expansion of his views. I have said more, in regard to this than I otherwise should have done, because I know that those, who boastingly make the assertion, regard it as a mark of superiority, as somewhat creditable to their intellect, and especially as establishing, at once, a reputation for consistency of character. And, I know too, that such an assertion, boastingly made as it often is, finds favor in the minds of the young, and they begin to look with pity and contempt

upon him, who acknowledges his liability to error, and confesses his willingness to change, both his opinions and his conduct, upon his conviction of the error of the one or of the impropriety of the other. I would have all such, both those who make the boast and those who regard it with favor, I would have all such, consider that the assertion itself indicates a small mind, and exceedingly contracted views, and that if any one pursues a course of conduct in accordance with such an assertion, his mind, his intellectual power and capacity will ever remain small and his views will ever continue contracted.

But what, you will ask, is the practical conclusion to be drawn from these general remarks, what the particular practical principles for which they lay the foundation? They are these. In the first place when a subject is presented for your consideration, improve faithfully the means and opportunities, which may be within your reach, for becoming acquainted with that subject. Cherish the feeling, that it is a matter of importance that you should understand the subject, that you

should form correct opinions in regard to it, and that you should be able to give a reason for your opinions, should be able to tell why you believe as you profess to believe. Is it a subject, in regard to which you will soon be called upon to act? Improve faithfully the time before you act in examining evidence, and weighing arguments, and establishing your opinions. It may be that in regard to many subjects, you will not be able to satisfy yourselves on all points. But you must not leave these subjects in all the vagueness of entirely unsettled opinions. You may examine them. In this way you may learn on what points satisfaction is to be obtained, in your present state of knowledge. You may know just where there is doubt, and mystery, and want of evidence. You may, in this way, be enabled to say, in regard to any subject, "so far I can see clearly, and understand fully; in regard to these points I have a distinct and positive belief, and am able to give the reasons of my belief. But, in regard to certain other points, upon the same subject, I am in doubt, I wish for further knowledge, more light, clearer and

less confused evidence, and therefore I have marked those points for further examination. The first practical principle which I would inculcate then, is to cherish activity of mind in the investigation of all subjects which may come under your consideration, to keep yourselves ever in an inquiring frame, so that you may acquire at once and promptly as accurate knowledge of the various objects around you and the various subjects which may be presented for your consideration, and form as correct opinions in regard to them as possible. Your conduct must be shaped by them as you pass. It is important, therefore, that you form the habit of examining them at once, and of deciding promptly as you pass. Cherish then, I would say, ever cherish an enquiring activity of mind.

In the second place, ever act promptly, and frankly, and fully according to your convictions at the time. Do you believe that a certain course of conduct is to day, your duty? Then engage in that course at once, without hesitation, and with a whole heart. There are some, who are ever hesitating in their

course. They fear that to morrow the subject may appear to them differently from what it does to day. Therefore, they spend the present time in idly waiting for further evidence, or go forward with a faltering step. They forget that, so far as duty is concerned, we are all beings of the present moment. The days which are passed, are gone forever from us. It may be, that the opinions, which we then entertained, are passed away with them, and that we have altered our conduct from the very courses, which we then most conscientiously regarded as the courses of duty. But what then? The opinions, which have passed away, were, at the time we embraced them, truth to our minds. The courses of conduct, in which we then engaged, were to our consciences the courses of duty. Our embracing those opinions, and engaging in those courses of conduct has been the very process employed by God to prepare us for our present opinions and duties. By embracing and performing them, we strengthened, within us, our devotion to truth and to duty, and we acquired intellectual power, and moral discern-

ment to enable us to examine more thoroughly and judge more correctly, than we otherwise could have done, in regard to our present duties and opinions. And so too, there is no doubt, if our minds expand, that the time will come, when some of our present opinions may seem erroneous, when we may feel ourselves called upon to depart from some of our present courses of conduct. But what then? Shall we neglect to form opinions? Shall we enter upon no courses of conduct whatever? Shall we cease to think, believe and act?—Certainly not. We are beings of the present moment, we must embrace opinions and perform duties at the present time. We must embrace those opinions too, which appear to us *now* to be the truth, and enter upon those courses of conduct which appear to us now, to be duty. The possibility, or even the probability, of a change hereafter, ought not to cause us to falter now. We should be whole hearted, acting frankly and fully up to the convictions of the present time. If, after the best examination I am enabled to give a subject, the truth appears to my mind to be upon

one side rather than upon the other, I will embrace that side of the question, openly and frankly. So, too, if after the best examination I can give a subject, I am satisfied as to the course of duty, I will enter upon that course, openly and frankly. In so doing, I do not say that I will never change my opinions, that I will never alter my conduct. I only say, that, as long as the reasons in support of these opinions appear to my mind as they now do, I shall adhere to them, that, as long as these courses of conduct appear to me to be my duty, so long shall I continue in them. The second practical principle then, which I would draw from my general views upon the subject, is, that we should ever act promptly, frankly and fully up to our convictions at the time. It matters not what may have been our convictions in former times. They are past and gone. They have fulfilled their mission, have prepared the way for, and have introduced our present convictions. Nor are we to trouble ourselves, as to what may be our convictions at some future time. That is no concern of ours. We are beings of the present

moment, and are bound to perform the duties of the present moment, to act out the convictions of the present moment. It is in this way, that we shall strengthen our devotion to truth and to duty. It is in this way, that we shall acquire mental power and moral discernment for future doubts and emergences. It is in this way, that we shall, by the right discharge of the duties of the present, prepare ourselves for the better discharge of our duties in all time to come.

But I have hinted at the possibility, nay more, at the probability of changes in opinion, and of changes in conduct. The third practical principle then, which I would deduce from the general remarks I have made, is, that you should ever keep your minds open to conviction. If certain opinions should appear to your mind to be true, that is a sufficient reason for your embracing them. But it is no reason why you should close your minds to all further consideration of the subject, why you should shut out all further convictions. You have believed a certain opinion to be true. That is sufficient to account for the influence, exerted

over your conduct, by that opinion. But, that you have, in times past, believed an opinion to be true, is no sufficient reason for refusing to consider and weigh the doubts, which may arise in regard to it. That you have believed it to be true, is no reason of itself why you should continue to believe it to be true. That you have been governed by this opinion in your conduct, when you believed it to be true, is no reason why you should continue to be governed by it, now that you have doubts of its correctness? And so in regard to duty. That you have believed a certain course of conduct to be your duty, is a sufficient reason for your having pursued that course. But, it is not a reason sufficient to justify your neglect to examine doubts, which may arise in regard to that course, your neglect to consider the query, which may sometimes spring up, whether that course of conduct be in accordance with your duty or not. Nor is it a reason sufficient to justify your adherence to that course, after you are convinced that it is wrong, or even after you may have good reason to doubt whether it be correct. Your circum-

stances are constantly changing. And every change places you in a new position, causes you to look upon subjects from a different point of observation. The aspects, which are thus successively presented to your view, will vary from each other, and consequently your conclusions will vary to accord with them. Then too, as your circumstances vary, your duties themselves will vary, in their positive character. What it was your duty to do yesterday, it may not be your duty to do to day. And what it is your duty to do to day, it may not be your duty to do to morrow. And these changes may result simply from a change in your circumstances and relations, without any change in yourself, as to motive, intention or purpose. You perceive, therefore, the propriety of the direction I would give, the practical conclusion which I would adopt, that you should ever keep your minds open to conviction. I do not mean that you should be ever wavering, passing from one side of a question to another, ever yielding your assent to the last book you may have read, on the last argument you may have heard. This does not

result from openness to conviction, but from vagueness of views. I may have clear and distinct views of a certain subject. While in the possession of these views, I may read the arguments of an opponent. In doing this, under these circumstances, I shall be able to see clearly the bearing of each position on my views. I shall know, at once, what objections are of no weight, and what are worthy a careful consideration. Shall I under such circumstances, be of the number of those who are continually wavering, passing from one side of the question to the other, and ever yielding assent to the last book read, or the last argument heard. Most surely not. But suppose an individual has no clear views, has only some vague and general impressions upon any subject. He reads a book upon one side of the question. The arguments appear plausible, the conclusion seems to be fairly drawn, and he is at once carried away, and yields his assent. He reads a book upon the opposite side of the question, in which the unsoundness of the arguments, and the error of the conclusion, in the one just read, are so pointed

out, as to excite his surprise, and now he is again carried away, but in an opposite direction. Wavering in opinions then, arises not from keeping the mind open to conviction, but from want of clearness and distinctness in our ideas, from not knowing precisely what we do believe and the particular reasons why we believe. Remember that you are imperfect beings, that your present views are, and must necessarily be, narrow and limited, compared with what may be your views at some future time. And consequently be careful ever to keep your minds open to conviction.

Finally: there is another important practical principle, nearly connected with the last, and that is, ever to be ready to admit to your own mind, and to acknowledge to others openly and frankly, that you have been in error, both in regard to opinions, and in regard to practice.

This, I believe, is the greatest practical difficulty. Men are unwilling to admit, even to their own minds, they are particularly unwilling to acknowledge to others, that they have been in error. But why should there be such

a reluctance? Is error so very uncommon in the world, that he who acknowledges that he has been in error, must be pointed at with the finger of scorn? To err is human. It is a necessary result of the imperfection of human nature, of the narrow views which men are often compelled to take, and to regard in practice, when viewed in connection with the fact, that the circumstances of life are continually changing, and man's views continually varying. There can be no disgrace in the simple fact of having been in error. If there be disgrace attached to the fact, it must arise from some attendant circumstances, from having given way to indolence, carelessness or prejudice. There is no disgrace attached to the fact of a change in opinions or practice. The disgrace, if there be any, must arise from having made the change without sufficient reason. Be careful, then, ever to cherish such feelings, as will cause you to be at all times ready to admit to your own mind and to acknowledge to others, that you have been in error in regard both to opinions and to practice. This is the state of feeling which con-

sistency of character requires, and which is calculated to promote your own individual and inward peace and happiness. It is the course which consistency of character requires. Do you point me to my opinions one year ago, and remind me of the zeal, with which I then supported those opinions? My answer is, and it is a sufficient answer before my own conscience and my God, that I then honestly believed those opinions to be true. Do you point me to my present opinions, entirely the reverse of the former, and reproach me with having changed. My answer is, and this too, is a sufficient answer before my conscience and my God, that, upon further examination, I have been led honestly to believe that my former opinions were erroneous, and therefore I have rejected them, and honestly to believe that the opinions, which I have now embraced, are true, and therefore I have embraced them. In all this I have been consistent with myself, true to my original motives, purposes and intentions, I have been influenced, through the whole, by the same unwavering devotion to

truth and to duty. And I am ready, frankly to acknowledge that I have been in error, and that I have changed my opinions. In this way, should every individual, as I conceive, be ready to give an answer to them that ask a reason for any change, in either opinions or in practice, which may have been made.

I have thus, my friends, endeavored to point out the proper foundation and the true nature of consistency of character. I have endeavored to show that it consists in an unwavering devotion to truth and to duty, that it does not forbid, but that, often on the contrary, it actually requires changes in opinions, changes in practice, and changes in the denominational or party relations which we may have sustained. I have said that he, who would maintain true consistency of character, should cherish an actively enquiring state of mind, in regard to the various subjects which may be presented for his consideration, that he should ever act openly and frankly and fully, according to his convictions at the time, that he should ever keep

his mind open to conviction, and ever hold himself ready to admit to his own mind and to acknowledge to others that he has been in error. Such, in my view, is the nature and foundation of true consistency of character, and such the practical principles, by an adherence to which an individual may maintain true consistency of character.

A single remark more and I have done. There are two courses, which men usually pursue in regard to this subject. Some look solely to the opinions of their fellow men, and endeavor to have their conduct appear consistent to those around. Others there are, who seek only for the approval of their own consciences, and the approbation of their God. The endeavor of such is, to maintain consistency before their own hearts, and in the presence of a heart-searching Jehovah, a consistency of feeling, intention and purpose. The former of these courses is one that is attended with constant perplexity. Our fellow men, those around us, judge so differently one from another, comparing our conduct with such different standards, and

viewing it from such different points of observation, that it is utterly impossible ever to secure the approbation of all, ever to appear consistent, at all times, in the eyes of all. The more we attempt it, the more harrassed and perplexed we shall be. But the latter course, seeking the approbation of our consciences and of our God, striving, not merely to appear truly self-consistent in our characters, but to be truly so, before our own hearts and in the presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, this is the course of peace and happiness. In the pursuit of this course, you are self-sustained, nay more, you are sustained from above, amid all the censures which may be heaped upon you from without. Consequently you can pass peacefully along, undisturbed by outward influences and prevailing reports. Nay more, you can pass peacefully along, through changes which you may be called to make, in your opinions, in your conduct, in your party and denominational relations, ever maintaining true consistency of character, and a consistency of feeling, motive, intention and purpose, and ever

guided by the uprightness and integrity of your own hearts, and ever sustained by the conscious enjoyment of the approbation of your God.

LETTER V.

MORAL DANGERS.

Introduction—The first source of danger, a neglect to acquire resources of happiness within one's self. Men created with social affections, and bound together in society. Great care should be exercised in choosing associates—To feel able to exercise this care one should feel, to a degree, independent of society—It is for the want of this feeling of independence that many young men fall into dangerous places of amusement and become addicted to gross and ruinous vices. The second source of danger, the social drinking of wine—This is useless—The young do not need wine, It is dangerous—It mingles with many of our common enjoyments and amusements—It excites the thirst for stronger stimulants—it destroys health and character. This, connected with the error that merriment is happiness—This shown to be a mistake—Merriment can be participated by the most polluted—it calls into exercise none of the higher powers and affections of our nature—it leaves a sense of degradation upon the mind—it cannot be enjoyed with those we most love and value among our friends—Conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I wish, in this letter, to raise the warning voice, to speak of the dangers, the deep, wide spread and ever threatening dangers, by which I believe you to be surrounded. In speaking upon such a subject, it will become me to speak plainly and distinctly. If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, the blood of those who are lost will be required at the hands of the watchman.

The dangers to which young men are exposed. What are some of them? Your first danger, and one which exposes you to many others, arises from the neglect to acquire resources of happiness within yourselves. Man was made for society. He is blessed with social affections. These bind him strongly to his fellows. These open to the heart, inlets of much enjoyment. The young, especially, feel the need of society. They are, as yet, comparatively ignorant, the mind is not as yet, stored with materials for reflection. And, even if it were, the individual is hardly capable, as yet, of deriving much happiness from his own reflections. And then, too, hope

is a gorgeous painter, coloring every thing around with the most brilliant hues. All objects appear inviting, all persons are clothed in the garb of friendship. He is all unsuspecting; his heart leaps for joy at the sight of a fellow being. This fondness for society is all as it should be, in its natural state. But it needs regulation. There is a choice in companions. Some are pure and virtuous. Their very presence checks every thing that is unholy and improper. Their language, even upon the most ordinary topics, breathes a spirit of purity, and kindness, and devotion. How blessed is that young man, whose companions are of this character. With them he is safe. Their society has a tendency to assimilate those who associate with them, to themselves in feeling and in character. But all companions are not of this character. There are those, whose characters are the very reverse of all this. Their very presence excites unholy and improper thoughts. Their most ordinary language is tainted with impurity, unkindness, or profanity. How unfortunate is that young man, whose associates are of this char-

acter. With them, he is ever exposed to danger. Their society has a tendency to assimilate him to themselves in feelings and in character. Such being the difference in character, and, such the different influences exerted by the companions, with whom we may associate, it is important that much care be exercised in the selection of associates. But in order that care may be exercised, the individual must be, in a degree, independent of associates. He should feel that, if he cannot readily meet with those whose characters are worthy, and whose influence will be good, he can be happy, for a time at least, without companions. It is often the case, I speak of facts, it is often the case, that young men fail to treasure up the resources of happiness within themselves, which may render them independent, in a degree of companions. If they have an evening unemployed, an evening, when not actually driven to their business, they cannot sit down and spend that evening by themselves. They are uneasy. They are unhappy. They feel a necessity upon them to go forth in search of associates or of amusement.

And, what is worst of all, feeling that they must have associates or amusements, that they cannot be contented without they exercise no discretion in the choice, but yield themselves to the first that may offer. There are others of a different character, fond of society indeed, and fond of amusements, they are kind and affable with all, but are careful in the selections of those with whom they suffer themselves to become intimate. If they find a companion whom they can respect and esteem, in whose society they are strengthened in their virtuous principles, they rejoice and thank God. But, if such a companion does not readily offer, they can sit down in their rooms and, by themselves, in some way, enjoy much happiness. They do not feel that craving demand for society, which will compel them to associate with evil persons rather than be alone. So these take pleasure in occasional amusement. But as the amusements which offer themselves are different in character and influence, they feel themselves called upon to exercise a choice. If no amusement which is of a proper character, and which is

calculated to exert a healthful influence, offers, they can be happy without; if those which are of a worthy character and which exert a healthful influence offer themselves they gladly and gratefully enjoy them. I appeal, my young friends, to yourselves. Is not the position which I have taken true? Is not the danger I have named great? Why, after the shops are closed and the business of the day is ended, why is the remainder of the evening spent as it often is, and that by many, in the billiard room or at the card table, or at the theatre, or in some other equally dangerous place of amusement? Do you say that this is not done, except by those who have formed a taste for such amusements? Believe me, this is not the case. All, indeed, who attend upon them soon acquire a taste and a fondness for them. But it is an acquired taste. It is the case with some, I presume, that when they first leave their parents and go to reside abroad, they know not what a billiard table is, they know not the spots upon the card, which give it its designation and its value in the game. How came they then, in these places? Be-

cause they could not bear to be alone.— Because they had no resources of happiness within themselves. They sought for, they longed after companions. And rather than be without, they consented to associate with those who have enticed them to these places. They are seeking only amusement, a pleasant way of passing the present hour, but they are laying the foundation of habits, and exciting a fondness and a taste, which will not be satisfied with mere amusement, which will lead to ruin. Should those young men, who now, merely for the sake of amusement, pass their time at the whist table or in the billiard room or in some other equally dangerous place of amusement, remove to the older and more corrupt cities of our land, they will be in great danger of becoming the inmates of those places technically and truly called hells.

The beginning, then, of those courses, which often prove the ruin of our young men, is in the want of resources of happiness within themselves. I have seen the pure minded, the kind hearted, the noble spirited, the highly talented, fall prostrate before the wither-

ing influences of vices, too gross to be here particularly dwelt upon. And how, I have asked, have they been led into these vices? The answer has been, they had no resources of happiness within themselves. They could not content themselves to be alone. They must have amusement from without. They must have companions. This, then, my young friends, is the first, and the most fruitful source of danger. When I have discovered this want of inward resources of happiness I have trembled, even though there were other and many promising traits of character. Yes, even though the young man were pious, regulating his conduct upon religious principles, if he have not, in connection with, and under the influence of his principles of piety, acquired the power and the habit of employing himself alone, a feeling that he is not dependent for happiness upon associates and amusements, or outward excitements of any kind, I should tremble for his religious character, I should earnestly hope, and fervently pray, but should hardly expect that such a one would remain faith-

ful to the end. To parents, I would say, whatever tastes you may cultivate, whatever habits you may form, whatever principles you may fix, if you do not, as the crowning of all your efforts, accustom your children to derive, in solitary hours and without a hankering for society, individual enjoyment from these tastes and habits and principles, there is great danger that your work will be in vain. My young friends, you may regard me as extravagant or fanatical, but when I look back upon my own youth, and enquire for what was then the most prolific source of danger, when I look to those of my companions, who have fallen in the way, when I look around me and see the young men that are going the downward road, I feel that the most fruitful source of danger is the want of resources of happiness within one's self. This, I say, is the most prolific source of danger, because it opens the avenues to almost every other danger. Could I speak so as to move the very depths of your heart, and leave an impression deep, indelible and as lasting as life, I would gladly so speak, as to awaken you to a realizing sense of the danger to which

you are exposed, from this source. I would gladly so speak as to move you to a constant and ever watchful guard against this danger, the danger arising from the want of some resources of happiness within yourselves, something which shall render you, to a degree, independent of associates, and enable you still to enjoy yourselves, though left alone.

The second source of danger, to which I would direct your attention is to be found in the social drinking of wine. I am not now about to address to you a temperance lecture. You well know that there are thousands of young men, who regard themselves as friends of temperance, who yet make free and frequent use of wine, especially are there many, who indulge in *the social drinking of wine*. This seems to be thought to be a necessary ingredient of social enjoyment. I am not here about to discuss the propriety of placing wine under the proscriptive ban of the temperance pledge. I am speaking as you will understand, to young men, of the dangers to which *they* are exposed. Is there to be a military supper, the idea that any one can sit down at

such a place, and participate and enjoy himself, would seem to many perfectly absurd and ridiculous. The idea that a company of friends and acquaintances can spend the evening together in any social enjoyment without wine seems by many to be thought strange. And the dangers to which I have already alluded are greatly enhanced, by the circumstance, that there the wine bottle must be introduced, to give life and promote merriment. Is a ride proposed? You will say to me, surely you can have no objection to this. It is a relief from the cares, and an escape from the tedium of business, it affords healthful exercise, introduces one to the enjoyment of pure and fresh air, lays open to the view of him who rides, the works of nature, the beautiful scenery of hill and dale, bending grass and waving corn; oh a ride is truly exhilarating, refreshing, and it may be, purifying in its influence! surely you can have no objections to a ride, even a social ride. No, my friends, I have no objection. I could say much in favor of the thing itself, when stripped of all connection with improper times and improper attendant circumstances.

But, tell me, would not most of our young men feel that a ride, without some place of resort, where they might indulge in the social drinking of wine, would be a tame affair indeed. Does one open in the vicinity of any of our cities or villages, a place of resort, for a ride and for an airing? Does he wish to induce young men to resort to it? And what is his advertisement? He may speak of the beauty of the scenery, of the freshness of the air, of the stillness, the great retirement, and good accommodations. But he closes his advertisement, and crowns the whole, by making known, *that the cellar is well stored with the choicest of wines and liquors.* This he proclaims with an emphasis, as that, which, if all other recommendations should fail, will be sure to draw custom. And do not these men understand themselves, their own interest? Do they not know, what is expected by those who ride from our cities and villages, and what is necessary in order to give satisfaction. It is not to the ride then, that I object; of that in itself considered, I approve. That, at proper times, I would commend. What I object to,

is the idea that you cannot have a social ride, that it would be a stupid and tame affair, without some place of resort, where you may indulge in the social drinking of wine. And so it is, in regard to almost every social enjoyment.

This social drinking of wine is, I say, fraught with great danger. In the first place, it is useless. It does you no good. If it produces excitement, and promotes merriment, it is an unnatural excitement and merriment. It may be thrilling, loud and boisterous, but it is unnatural and leaves the system, both body and mind, in an unnatural and dangerous condition. I say that wine is useless, it is certainly injurious. On this point, I speak, not merely my own opinion, not merely the opinion of others in temperance, whom you may regard as fanatical.— I will refer you to the writings of Dr. Combe, one who will be admitted by all to be a fair minded and rational man. In speaking upon this subject, he says, “Wine is not only unnecessary, but positively detrimental to children,” that is to children in general, for he

admits that there may be exceptions. "In youth, the natural tendency is to excitement, and, consequently, as a general rule, the stimulus of fermented liquor is injurious." If, says he, "it be contended that this amounts to a virtual prohibition of wine and stimulant liquors, I admit, at once, that when the whole animal functions go on healthfully and energetically without them, their use is in my opinion, injurious to health. "If it be asked," he says, in another place, "if it be asked whether I go the length of proscribing all fermented liquors, I answer that I do not, I merely mean, that when the general health is perfect, without them, they ought not to be taken, because, then, their only effect is to produce unnatural excitement." He gives as a rule that they are not to be taken when they quicken the circulation, excite the mind, or disturb the digestion. But is not the very reason why young persons resort to the social drinking of wine, that it may excite the mind? The social drinking of wine is useless, it is dangerous. The remarks which I have quoted, refer to health; it is dangerous

to character. It excites a hankering, which is strengthened by repeated indulgence, until it becomes too strong to be satisfied with wine, it demands some more powerful stimulant. It is often the case that those, who began with wine, soon resorted to whiskey punch and other drinks of a still stronger nature. It often happens, that those, who, in the social party, and in the presence of ladies, will only take their glass of wine, will when they have escorted these ladies to their residences, resort to some place where can be obtained something stronger than wine. But my friends, what leads me to speak upon this point, more plainly and earnestly than I otherwise should do, is, that I am satisfied, that nine tenths of all the intemperance, which has prevailed among that class which I am addressing, has been produced by the social drinking of wine. Were I speaking to hard laboring persons, were I speaking to lumbermen, were I speaking to the hardy sailor, were I speaking to the emigrants, I should speak differently, for those classes are not in danger from the social drinking of wine.

Should I point out to them their danger, I must touch upon different topics. But you will remember that I am not speaking to them, that I am speaking to you, young men. It is my wish, not to direct your thoughts to others, but to fix them upon the dangers to which you are yourselves exposed. And, I believe that I am fully and completely within bounds, when I say that nine tenths of all the intemperance, which has prevailed among the classes, to which you probably belong, has been produced by the social drinking of wine. Could I, with prophetic glance, see who, among my readers, are to become intemperate, if any such be among them, I should undoubtedly find them to be those, who are given to the social drinking of wine, those who will not take warning, who will not fly from the danger which threatens them. Understand me, my friends, I am not now speaking to those who have long been in this habit. I speak to you, young men, in regard to a habit, which has not yet acquired the command over you. Let me, then, with all the solemnity of one who feels that he is accountable for what he

says, with all the affection of one who would labor day and night for your good, and with all the earnestness of one, who speaks from the deepest convictions of the heart, let me warn you, let me beseech you, to avoid this dangerous practice, the social drinking of wine. Avoid it, as you would the haunts of some evil beast, avoid it as you would the road, where you feel certain that many of the travellers will be destroyed, and where it would be folly to suppose that you should be among the favored few, who escape. Yes, I repeat, come not near this dangerous practice, the social drinking of wine, fly from it as you would from some deadly poison. The way may appear smooth and pleasant at first, there may be much of merriment, but as you pass down the declivity, it will be constantly becoming more steep, and your descent more rapid; as you pass down, I say, you will find it becoming dark and gloomy, and ere long, you will perceive the way scattered with marks of the bloated forms, the wrecked property, the shattered minds of those, who once thought that way as fair and as smooth as it now seems to

you. Come not near it, fly from it. I know not but I ought, before dismissing this topic, to allude to the mistaken notion which many young men have, and which gives rise to indulgences like the one I have noticed. The mistake is, that merriment and happiness are one and the same thing. This, I say, is a mistake. In a season of merriment, there is a tumultuous excitement of the feelings and the passions. The individuals become boisterous. There is the coarse joke, the comic song, the loud laugh. These are some of the elements of a scene of merriment. Is this happiness? Just look at the state of feelings in which one may enter upon such a scene. The most guilty and polluted and abandoned wretch living, he whose breast is a living and tormenting hell, may join in such a scene, and may in the boisterousness of his merriment, seem to forget all that he was. But when the scene of merriment is gone, then his guilty or remorseful feelings return to him. And when they return, the thoughts of his temporary merriment gives him no peace. It seems to him to have been madness. Then, too, con-

sider the parts that are called into play by such a scene. Are the higher powers, the finer feelings, and the purer affections of the soul called into play in a scene of wine excited merriment? Most surely not; they are the animal appetites and passions, which have been gratified and indulged, and through the indulgence of which, the excitement has been produced. Just consider the comparisons, which those fond of such scenes, employ to express their idea of the pleasure. 'Our friend was as merry as'—'as what, as an angel?' 'No, as merry as'—Your own imagination can complete the sentence. But if it be true to fact, it will complete the sentence in such a way as will convey a sense of the degradation, incurred by the scene. Again, these scenes of merriment are closed to ladies. Is he who is fond of them and often indulges in them, a brother or a husband? Will he take with him his sister or his wife? And why not? Do not our sisters and our wives love us. Will they not rejoice to see us enjoying happiness? Do we not love them and shall we not be glad to have them witness our happiness? The very idea

of their being with us, tells us, in language that we cannot escape, that this same merriment in which we can indulge, in the most polluted state of the soul, in which only the lower and baser parts of our nature, those which ally us to brutes, are excited, which we cannot look back upon with such pleasure as would lead us to speak of them before those we respect, which we designate but by comparisons derogatory to our character, and in which we cannot admit those nearest and dearest to us to participate and sympathize with us, that this same merriment is not happiness. I have thus, my young friends, spoken of some of the dangers to which you are exposed.—There are other dangers still of which I shall speak in my next letter. Those to which I have now directed your attention are indeed truly appalling. They have slain, and they are every day slaying their thousands, and their tens of thousands. And these too, from among the brightest and the most promising of the land. Let me then, intreat you, not to dismiss the suggestions of this letter, with a mere passing remark. Weigh them carefully, and apply them faithfully.

LETTER VI.

MORAL DANGER.

Introduction—There is danger of resting the hope of future security against vice on the ground of present abhorrence of vicious indulgence—Many now debased and degraded, once felt equally strong abhorrence—How is it, and why is it, that men become so changed in feelings and in character? It is by a gradual and almost imperceptible process, by taking one short step after another. The danger is in first, and trifling indulgences. First and trifling indulgences deaden the moral sensibilities, unfit the mind for judging correctly of the enormity of any particular crime, or the evil of any particular indulgence, and bring the individual into contact with temptations too powerful for him to withstand. There is danger in indifference to vice—in confidence in one's moral strength—in disregard of the universally corrupting influence of a single vice upon the whole character, and in a neglect to employ the means provided for escape. There is danger from evil associates, danger arising from the regular operation of the laws of our nature—Conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I must continue in this letter, the admonitory strain which I commenced in my last. The dangers to which you are exposed are so many, and of such a specious appearance and character, that I cannot dismiss them all within the short compass of a single letter. I have spoken, in my last, of the dangers arising from a neglect to provide resources of happiness within one's self, and from the still too prevalent practice of the social drinking of wine. I shall, in this letter, warn you against other dangers.

And first, I would say that you are much in danger, from the false notions you may entertain, in regard to the grounds of your security. You now shudder at the very thought of becoming, yourselves, dissipated, abandoned and profligate. And you feel perfectly confident, that you never shall become so, because your feelings so readily revolt at the very thought. Your present abhorrence of vice and degradation, is your ground of hope, that you shall ever remain secure. But, my young friends, I must tell you, that this is a very unsafe ground

on which to rest your hopes of security. If you look around, you can see many who are now sunk in the most debasing degradation. You turn from them with loathing and disgust. You believe it to be impossible, that you should yourselves ever become so debased, so degraded. But I can assure you, that these very persons, in all probability, once felt as great an abhorrence of the vices, to which they are now addicted, of which they are now the slaves, and the victims, as you are conscious of feeling, at the present moment. For it is a fact, that men may, and that men often do, voluntarily yield to those very indulgences, and commit those very crimes in after life, the bare mention of which, in their early years, filled them with horror. It is no sure sign, then, that you will not, hereafter, sink into the depths of vicious indulgence, that your feelings now revolt, at the sight, or thought, or mention of it. But how is it, and why is it, you will ask, that men become so changed? How is it, and why is it, that he, who in early life is alive to duty, and trembles at the thought of vice, should become so changed as to laugh at the

mention of duty, and voluntarily to plunge, headlong, into the lowest depths of vicious indulgence? In answer to the question, how it is that men become so changed, I would say it is, by a gradual, and at the time, an almost imperceptible process, by taking first one short step from the path of duty and then another short step, and then another as short. Each is short. And every successive step seems to advance but a very short distance, and a distance too, which may be easily retraced. But these short steps as they succeed each other, are carrying the individual further and further from the path of duty.

In answer to the question, why it is, that men become so changed, I should say, it is through the deadening and corrupting influence of vice, of sinful indulgence. The first departure from right, the first indulgence in sin may be but trifling in itself, but it may be important in its consequences. Its natural influence, will be, to blunt and deaden the moral feelings. The child, who is accustomed to obey his parents, will be shocked, to see another entirely disregard parental wishes, and parental commands.

But if, through the power of temptation he is led to disobey, he can look with calmness upon his mate who is habitually and obstinately disobedient. His indulgence has blunted and deadened his own feelings. And so it is in all cases, first and trifling departures from duty, deaden your dread of wrong doing, and blunt your sensibility to what is right. When, for the first time you have done wrong, when, for example, you have for the first time uttered a falsehood, you feel unhappy to think that you have done so. This feeling of unhappiness you will strive to banish from your bosom.— You attempt to justify yourself to your own mind. And you say to yourself “I don’t care.” By constantly saying to yourself “I don’t care,” and under the influence of your natural desire to appear consistent to your own mind in your words and actions, you will at length acquire the feeling of indifference, you will arrive at that state of feeling in which it will be true, that you don’t care. And in this way, your first and trifling indulgence has operated to destroy the delicacy and tenderness of your sensibility to right and to wrong.

Again, you know the effect upon a boy even of losing his character among his mates. It often happens, that a boy who is publicly punished at school and who in that way loses his character among his school mates, becomes through the influence of that punishment perfectly indifferent to duty, and utterly reckless as to his character. It is very much the same, when one loses his character in his own estimation. If a boy feels that he sustains a character for good scholarship, he will be anxious to preserve that character. But if he once loses that feeling, all his zeal for study goes with it. And so it is, to a still greater degree, with young men, in regard to moral character. If a young man feels that he sustains a character marked by an inviolable regard to duty, and known to be so marked by those with whom he associates, he will strive to preserve that character, he will take much pains, and make great efforts to do it. But let him lose this character, in his own estimation, let him feel that he is not worthy of regard, as being strictly correct in his conduct, and he will soon become utterly indifferent and reckless. But

first and trifling departures from duty have the effect to lower the character of the individual in his own estimation, and, in that way, to destroy his anxiety to lead a pure and spotless life. In this way, then, you perceive that first and trifling indulgences deaden and destroy the moral sensibilities.

Again, these first and trifling indulgences, unfit the mind for judging correctly of the enormity of any particular crime, or of the evil of any particular indulgence. When we speak of any thing as being great or small, we mean that it is great, or small, compared with some fixed standard of estimation, or with the usual habits of feeling and of judging, to which the mind is accustomed. For example, he who is accustomed to but small dealings in money matters, would regard one hundred dollars as a very large sum, while he who has been accustomed to transactions of the value of thousands, would regard one hundred dollars as a small sum. It is the same with regard to actions, both good and bad.— If you are now free from vicious pollution, it seems to you a great degradation to be guilty:

of a certain vicious indulgence, to be guilty, for example, of actual intemperance. But if you associate freely with those who habitually drink, and occasionally indulge to excess, and become somewhat merry, and, especially, if you should yourself for once or twice be overtaken, and become intoxicated, it would seem to you but a small thing, but a very trifling degradation, and perhaps no degradation at all, to be guilty of this same vicious indulgence. Thus, you perceive, that trifling indulgences unfit the mind for judging of the enormity of any particular crime or of the evil of any particular indulgence. For crimes and vicious indulgences appear enormous or not enormous, according as they bear a comparison with our present feelings and present habits.

Still further, first and trifling indulgences will often bring you into contact with temptations, too powerful for your strength, into circumstances, by the influence of which, you will be carried forward to further and vicious indulgences. Let me illustrate. Here is a youth, who has been carefully trained while

under the parental roof. It has been the endeavor of his father and his mother to instill into his mind good principles, to fix his affections upon proper objects, and to form him to correct habits. But, as he has arrived to the proper age, he is placed with the city merchant, to prepare for the business of life. He is sad at parting, and promises both to himself and his parents, that he will follow strictly the instructions and the advice, which have been given. For awhile, he is perfectly correct. He is devoted to his master's business, during business hours. His leisure time he spends in a profitable manner. The pocket money, which he may obtain from the perquisites of the store, is carefully saved or devoted to the purchase of what is necessary and useful. On the sabbath he is regular in his attendance upon public worship and diligent in his endeavors to acquire religious knowledge and to secure religious improvement. At morning and at evening, as he rises and retires, his perusal of the Bible and his acts of secret prayer open and close the day. Such is his course for a while. But,

at length, he becomes acquainted with others in the same situation with himself, who have been longer exposed, and who have fallen victims to the temptations by which they have been assailed. These appear gay and jovial and happy. They are kind in their attentions and insinuating in their manners.— They appear to take a great interest in him and to manifest a wish for his improvement. They take an interest in his reading and offer to furnish him with books, but, at the same time, they hint that it would promote cheerfulness and health to relax occasionally, and spend an evening in social amusement. The books they offer he gladly accepts. But they are of a trifling character and of a dangerous tendency. His companions invite him to leave his own place of worship occasionally on the Sabbath, and take him first to one place, then to another, telling him of the pleasure there is, as well as profit, in hearing different preachers. He accepts their invitation. As he hears one preacher after another, his mind is filled with curiosity, while his heart is growing cold and indifferent, in

regard to personal religion. He may, perhaps, be improving as a critic upon sermons, and styles of preaching, while he moves in a retrograde direction as to his own growth in grace. But, at length, his companions speak of the confinement of the week, and of the need of stirring about. They ask him to ride out into the country on the Sabbath.— And so they proceed, from one step to another. If he accepts their invitation to ride he is expected to invite them to ride in return. And if he does not so invite them, he is branded with epithets indicating his meanness. His expenses are increasing. He takes from his master's drawer, to answer present necessity, intending to restore all punctually, with the first supply he receives. In this way, the youth becomes dissipated, is guilty of crime, has lost all regard for the feelings of parents, all regard for the distinction between right and wrong, and is prepared for crimes of the darkest die. Thus this youth has become completely changed. But, as you see, it was by taking one short step after another. It did not take place on a

sudden. Each step seemed but short. And there was much of remorse in the intervals, much of resolving to return, but, when the next temptation came, it seemed so trifling, that it was thought that one step, that single trifling indulgence, would not make the return more difficult. But, my young friends, where was the point at which this youth should have stopped? It was at the very outset, at the first trifling departure from right.—When he had become intimately connected with these dangerous companions, as you will perceive, it would have been more difficult for him to have broken away from them, than it would have been, at first, to have declined an intimacy with them. When they invite him to ride with them, it would have been comparatively an easy matter for him to have declined. But, when he had accepted their invitation and had enjoyed the ride, it would have been a difficult matter to have refused to invite them to ride in return, and to have endured, in consequence, their reproaches for meanness. When they offered to furnish him with books, it would have

been comparatively easy for him to have declined. But, when he had taken the books and read them, it would have been a difficult matter to have objected to the character of the books, and, on that account declined to read farther, because he must then have endured their sneers, at his strict and particular notions. When they invited him to accompany them on the Sabbath to various meetings, it would have been easy to have declined, but after having gone with them once, it was difficult to turn about. At the very first trifling departure, then, was the point where he should have stood firm. If you are standing on smooth and level ground, at the top of an eminence, whose sides are steep and slippery, it is much easier to remain, to stand firm, there, than it is, after you have stepped down, to regain your foothold. Thus you perceive that first and trifling indulgences have brought the young man into circumstances, which exert a controlling power over him, into contact with temptations, too powerful for him to withstand.

I have thus, my young friends, endeavored

to point out the influence of first and trifling indulgences, in changing the feelings of men in regard to vicious indulgences and criminal conduct. I have done this, in order to shew you that you can place no dependence for your future security, upon your present feelings of abhorrence. Others have felt as great an abhorrence as you now feel, and yet they have yielded to temptations, have changed in their feelings, and have been ruined. Your only security must consist in your knowledge of the danger there is in first and trifling indulgences. Remember then, I beseech you, that doing wrong, even in the most trifling act, destroys your dread of wrong doing, renders you incapable of judging how great the wrong may be, which you commit, and may bring you into contact with temptations too powerful for your resistance. Let me then urge you, by all that you value in character, or hope for of happiness, let me urge you never, in a single instance, to do what you may think is wrong. You had better be laughed at by all your companions. You had better endure the

severest punishment that could possibly be inflicted, than to do or say what you may think to be wrong. These sneers of your companions will last but a few days. The pain of the most severe punishment will soon pass away. But the influence of having done wrong, what you sincerely believe to have been wrong, will cling to you and make you unhappy for years. It will, in all probability, drive you to wrong doing again, and urge you on from one step to another, till it plunges you in moral ruin. You may think that no one sees you when you are doing wrong, and that you will not be detected. But you yourselves will know that you have done wrong. You will lose your peace of mind in consequence. For you will not forget your having done wrong. There may indeed be times when you will seem to forget it. But there will be other times, when it will be brought to your mind with a soul stirring power. For you cannot, at all times, escape from yourselves. Remember then, that your security consists in the strength of your feeling that you are always in danger in your

care to avoid first, and what may seem to you trifling indulgences.

There is danger my young friends, arising from your indulging feelings of indifference, in regard to sin, in regard to its nature and influences, and the avenues and temptations which lead to it. Yes, I say, you are in danger, from indulging feelings of indifference, in regard to sin. I know it is common in speaking to young men, to speak of vice. But I wish to have you look at your conduct, in its relation to the law of God. The term, vice, would lead you to look upon the actions to which it is applied in their relation to yourselves, or to society around you. The word sin, when applied to the same actions, should lead you to look upon these actions in their relation to God, and his law. I say, therefore, that you are in danger, in great danger, if you are indifferent to the nature and influences, the avenues and temptations of sin. Suppose, my young friends, that you should, each of you, receive a communication addressed to the inhabitants of the place where you reside,

from physicians whom you regard with confidence, stating that there was beginning to prevail an insidious and secretly spreading disease, a disease which frequently gained much strength before the patient could be aware of his situation, a disease to which all are equally exposed, which entails much suffering, and in a large proportion of cases, proves fatal. And suppose, still further, that many should read that communication, and then carelessly throw it aside, and think no more of the disease. Suppose that they should not even enquire into its nature, its symptoms, or its predisposing causes, and should neglect to enquire whether they themselves were in danger or not. Would you not say that such persons were running a great risk, were exposing themselves to great danger, by their indifference. But I am addressing young men, who, are under the light of Christianity, in a land of Bibles, young men, who may have each of them his own Bible in his hands, and should not neglect to be thus supplied. Nay, more, these letters are not addressed to skeptics, or to confirmed in-

fidels. To them I should address a different language. I am addressing, therefore, young men who profess to regard that book as containing revelations from God, annunciations and instructions of the highest importance to man. But if you will open that book you will find much said about sin. You will learn that it is an abomination in the sight of God, that its ways, or consequences, are death, that it is hateful to that being of perfect goodness, on whom you depend, and to whom you are accountable, that it is destructive of the best interests of man, in this world, that it is threatened with the severest consequences, in the world to come, and that it is an evil, a disease to which all are exposed, yea, an evil, with which all are actually tainted. Now I ask, is it possible, for a thinking, a reflecting young man, who honestly believes the Bible to contain a revelation from God, and who reads all this in the Bible, in regard to sin, is it possible for such an one, to pass carelessly over the subject, to spend so little thought upon it, as not even to ask what sin is, what are its manifestations, and its conse-

quences, the temptations and allurements, which lead to it, nor enquire whether he may not himself, be already tainted with it, and a slave to it. And yet, how few there are comparatively speaking, especially among our young men, who do really enquire into the whole meaning, and extent, of God's requirements. How few are there, who are anxiously, and honestly endeavoring to understand the insidious nature, the debasing tendency and the awful consequences of sin. And are not all such in danger, great danger, from their indifference to the nature of sin, of wrong doing?

There is danger arising from your cherishing a feeling of self-security. I have already spoken of the danger of resting your hopes of security, upon present feelings of abhorrence. What I mean now, is something a little different, a reliance upon one's own moral strength, a feeling that we can ever stand firm, although others may have fallen in the same course. There is much, by far too much, of this dangerous self reliance, self security. You may find young men who

speaking of vice, of sin, with deep feelings, and who seem to have just views of its nature, tendency and consequences. They profess to be filled with wonder, that so many should go carelessly on, while exposed to so great dangers they point out, and mourn over the numerous instances of moral degradation and ruin which are around them, while yet they are, themselves, pressing on in the very courses which have brought others to their ruin, regardless of their danger, or rather cherishing the feeling that their moral strength is too great to be easily overcome. This feeling prevails, in regard to all vices, all sins, but that my illustrations may be the more palpable, I will select the vice, or sin of intemperance. How many are there, even now, in the community, especially among our young men, who will mourn over the evils of intemperance, who speak earnestly in favor of temperance, who wonder at the extreme folly of their fellow men, as they sink slowly down, one after another, into the depths of intemperance, while yet these very individuals are in the daily habit of temperate drinking, as it is call-

ed, or indulge themselves in the free use of wine, or at least regard it as important, that on special occasions, wine should be introduced, to increase the enjoyment of the occasion, and in some one of these ways, pursuing the very course which has conducted their neighbors, at whom they are wondering, and over whom they are mourning, to the lowest depths of loathsome, and disgusting, and revolting intemperance. You may tell them that temperate drinking, or the free use of wine, or occasional social wine drinking, are but the schools of intemperance, that the very individuals, over whose lost condition they are mourning, and at whose folly they are wondering, were once as temperate, and as confident of their own safety, as they can now be, and they will acknowledge the truth and force of all that you may say. But if you go one step further and attempt to convince them of their own danger, they will at once laugh you to scorn. Their step is as yet firm and elastic, they have the most perfect command of themselves, they can exercise their coolest discretion and judgment in regard to the times of drinking, and

the quantity they may take. Nay, more, they will go so far as to admit that they are walking in a path, where, judging from past experience, they have reason to believe, that a very large proportion will be ruined, and yet they will contend, that they shall surely be among the number of those who will escape unharmed. And so they press on, vainly relying upon their own moral strength. They press on in perfect confidence as to their own safety, until before they are aware of their danger, they find themselves so far on the downward road to ruin that they cannot recover themselves. Thousands of young men there are, who are cherishing feelings of self-dependence, and self-security like these, in regard to all the various vices and sins to which they are exposed. I have selected the evil of intemperance, not because it differs from others in the danger itself, but because it is an evil in which the whole course is obvious and the danger palpable. And now, my young friends, look into your hearts, I beseech you, and enquire if you are not yourselves at this very moment, cherishing a dangerous feeling

of self-security. Examine your conduct, and enquire if you are not at this very time, allowing yourselves in that society, or engaging in those practices, or yielding to those indulgences which have been the ruin of others, while yet you feel yourselves to be safe. And, if so, are you not, I ask, cherishing a dangerous feeling of self security? Look around you. Thousands of the beautiful and the fair, of the manly and the promising have fallen, and are falling at your right hand and at your left, into the moral ruin of vicious and sinful indulgences. They were as well able to withstand, as you can be. They felt as self confident and as secure as you can feel. In the days of their strength, they would have laughed at the idea that they were in danger. Remember this, and let it impress deeply upon your minds a lesson of wisdom. Cherish the feeling that you too, are exposed to the same enemy, before which they have ingloriously fallen, and that you have no security but in a deep feeling of your own weakness, in watchfulness, vigilance and prayer.

There is danger, too, in the disposition

which some young men manifest to shut their eyes to the universally debasing tendency of particular sins, and vices. What I mean, is, the natural tendency of indulgence in any one vice or sin, to harden and corrupt the heart, in all its feelings, to debase and degrade the character in all its various parts. Here, for example, is a young man of the finest feelings, of the purest sentiments, of the kindest heart, of the tenderest conscience. He is one of the most obedient of children, one of the most affectionate of brothers, one of the most devoted husbands, one of the most faithful of fathers, but in an evil hour yields to temptations to engage in gambling. As he continues, his interest increases until it becomes an all absorbing passion. This seems to be but a single fault, and you are, perhaps ready to say, that this certainly cannot interfere with the natural flow of his affections. But you are mistaken. As he indulges in this one vice, it sends its debasing influence over the whole man, destroying every thing that is beautiful or praiseworthy in character. He loses all the natural affections of a child, a brother, a hus-

band and a father. His natural feelings are hardened, his natural affections are deadened, he is brutified and degraded in his whole character. Such is the universally debasing tendency of this one vice of gaming. This tendency is not peculiar to this particular vice. It is common to all vicious or sinful indulgences.—He who gives himself up to any one sinful or vicious indulgence, although he may for a time withstand the temptation to others, does yet become hardened in all his feelings, and debased in his whole character. Such is the spreading nature, and the corrupting influence of sin, of vice, that no one can yield to a single sinful or vicious indulgence with any well grounded hope that its influence shall not extend over the whole character. How many are there who look upon sins and vices as separate, and not as existing in families and classes, who hope to cultivate an acquaintance with one without becoming a slave to all others. But how delusive are these hopes. How many have been ruined by cherishing them. Vicious and sinful indulgence is a stream of very rapid descent. If you launch your barque

upon this stream you know not how fast, nor how far you may be carried. And you are deceiving yourselves, if you hope to sail but a short distance, and then to resist its downward course. Beware then, my young friends, how you expose yourselves to danger, by disregarding the universally corrupting tendency of particular sins.

There is danger, great danger arising from your undervaluing the means, and the sure and effectual, means of preventing your becoming the victims of vice, or of rescuing you from its power. And here, I feel myself in duty bound to urge upon you an attention to the subject of religion. I may perhaps before closing my letters, speak upon the subject more fully than I can now. But I may speak of it now and I ought to speak of it in this connection as the means provided by God for our deliverance from vice, sin and misery. God knowing the real nature, the debasing tendency and the destructive consequences of sin, and being filled with love for his children, sent his son, Christ Jesus to save men from their sins. That son appeared on earth, la-

bored, suffered and died in the cause of human salvation, for the purpose of rescuing men from the love, the power and the consequences of sin. We have in our hands the records of what Jesus did, and of what he taught, of his sufferings and of his death. The motives, the hopes, the injunctions of the gospel are made known to us, and often urged home upon our attention. And yet notwithstanding all this there are many who listen to all these things, as to a tale that is told, or as to the song of one who hath a pleasant voice. They lay not these things to heart, they undervalue and disregard and set at naught all that has been done for our rescue from the power of vice, the consequences of sin. And are not all such in danger? You may feel, my young friends, that you can rely on your own internal energy of character, that you may rely on your habits and principles. But I can assure you, that valuable and important as all these are, there is danger that they will all prove too weak unless based upon, and supported by, religious principles and considerations. When tempted to turn aside from the path of duty,

all these considerations which may be suggested by past character and past habits and principles, by a regard to reputation or even happiness, will seem but the cold calculations of prudence, the dictates of mere expediency.—The single thought, “I cannot do this, and sin against God,” will be more powerful than them all, to put to flight the temptations that may assail, or to send new strength through the nerve, and enable you to withstand. Remember I beseech you, that you are always exposed to danger, that you are yourselves weak and easily overcome, and that your only hope of coming off conquerors over your temptations and dangers, must be upon the depth of your feeling of your own weakness, upon the strength of your religious principles, and upon the carefulness with which you watch, and the fervency with which you pray.

Before I close this letter, I will offer a few suggestions on the danger of evil associates, or rather upon those principles of our nature which render evil associates so dangerous.—And I remark, in the first place, that the principle of imitation is implanted in our natures

and exerts a powerful influence in the formation of our characters. We are imitative beings. We are all prone to imitate those with whom we associate. You have all, I presume, witnessed the effects of this principle in the language, the air, the manners and in short in the whole appearance and deportment. But I would in this place direct your attention especially to the influence of this principle upon the character. We naturally and almost unavoidably, not only acquire a resemblance in manners to those with whom we associate, but we often become assimilated to them in character. Are they possessed of genuine worth, persons of sterling integrity? Do they regulate all their conduct by a regard to the precepts of virtue and piety? If so, their high example will attract our love, and secure our admiration, and we shall soon find ourselves imitating almost unconsciously the peculiarities of character which we love and admire, we shall find that if we are much in their society, we shall be gradually and almost imperceptibly becoming assimilated to them.

On the contrary, are our companions and

associates the profane, the dissolute, the profligate, we shall soon be infected by the contagion of their example, we shall soon find ourselves becoming like them. Indeed it is a principle of similarity which often lies at the foundation of our intimacy. It is often a resemblance either in disposition and character, which, without perhaps our being aware of its influence over us, regulates our selection of intimate acquaintances. And our intimacy generally increases as by constantly associating together we become more and more assimilated to each other. You may say that the influence of associates upon each other, is reciprocal. That instead of being destroyed by the vicious examples of others, you may yourself exert an influence over them for good.— This may be so. But it is more than probable, that the influence of vicious associates will preponderate. The one is struggling to ascend, the other throws the weight of his influence into the descending scale. It is then, more than probable that the influence which is downward in its tendency, will overpower that which is upward.

Then too, you may each of you have something in your very constitutions which is calculated to render you an easy prey to some particular vices. In regard to these vices to which you are exposed by your constitutional temperament you should be ever most carefully on your guard, striving to avoid by all means those companions and associates who might lead you into them.

Then too, the power of this instructive propensity to imitate is manifested not merely in regard to the sins which most easily beset one, but also in regard to those to which one is not by nature inclined. It is often the case, that young persons especially acquire insensibly, habits of profane swearing, or become intemperate and licentious, not from any strong natural, constitutional bias, but simply through the power of this principle of imitation, because they have been thoughtless and inattentive in the selection of their associates. Remember then, my young friends that you have that within you, that tendency to imitation, which will with almost unfailing certainty assimilate you in character and feel-

ings to those with whom you may associate. Remember this, and let it put you upon your guard in your selection of companions.

Still further, there is another principle which, in connection with the last, increases your danger. And that is, a desire to render ourselves agreeable to those with whom we associate. This is one of our natural tendencies. It is in itself truly amiable, and highly important. But it is a tendency which will expose you to peculiar danger, unless regulated by reason, and prudence and religious principle. We are told that the fear of man bringeth a snare. This is never more true, than when applied to the fear we sometimes experience of incurring the displeasure of our friends and associates. To be firm in our adherence to a virtuous course, when, by being so, we shall be singular, requires no small share of true fortitude, and especially to stand firm, when by doing so, we shall incur the displeasure of our companions, requires much true christian independence. That those who voluntarily associate with evil companions, will disregard their example, and resist their influence, is

more than we have reason to expect. How often do persons yield to indulgences which are contrary to their consciences, their reason, and even to their inclinations, simply because they dread to give offence to their associates. To manifest openly and decidedly an abhorrence of practices which others, many of them persons whom we respect, and all of whom are our associates, unhesitatingly practice, requires more moral courage than most young persons possess, certainly more than they usually manifest, moral courage which those who voluntarily associate with the unprincipled and profligate will not long retain. This principle, then you see, or tendency of your natures, to seek the approbation of those with whom you may associate, may operate to your ruin, if you associate with the unprincipled and the profligate. Remember then, my young friends, that from the very principles of your nature, you cannot become intimate with associates without wishing to render yourselves agreeable in their eyes, to secure their approbation, and that this wish, whether you are aware of it or not, will exert a powerful, a

controlling influence upon your own conduct. And, remember too, that you will naturally judge of the conduct which is well pleasing to your associates, by looking at their own. There is every reason therefore, to suppose that if you select for your associates, those who are unprincipled, and of profligate characters, you will yourselves fall victims to the same vices by which your associates have been enslaved.

I hardly know, my young friends, where to stop, when upon this subject, so great are your dangers and so heedless are most young persons in regard to them. It is dangerous even for those advanced to middle age, and who are most firmly established in principles of piety and habits of virtue, it is dangerous for even such to associate freely with the persons of corrupt principles and vicious practices. But when a young man, one whose principles are not firmly established, and whose character is not fully formed and established, when such a one selects for his companions persons of vicious principles, of profligate habits and of dissolute lives, we not only say that he is in great danger, but we feel ourselves authorized

from what we know of human nature to say that he will with an almost indubitable certainty quickly lose all that instinctive horror and dread of vicious actions which is the natural guard of innocence, that he will soon be emboldened to yield to the indulgences, or to commit the crimes which are familiar with his associates. Scenes of profligacy and of vice as they become familiar to his mind, will pollute the heart, corrupt the taste, influence the passions and pervert the judgment. Vicious habits will be insensibly formed, and will continually gather strength, until they draw around their victims the strong bonds of moral slavery. This we feel authorized to say, will be the natural at least, if not the necessary consequences of selecting the vicious as intimate associates and bosom companions. It follows as directly and as certainly as under the more obvious and better understood laws of the natural world an effect follows its cause.

But I have said enough. It would be impossible to point out all the sources of danger to which you are exposed. I would hope that what I have said may be sufficient to

awaken you to the truth, that they are extremely numerous, that they lie beside all your paths and that your only hope is in cherishing thoughts of your own weakness, in watchfulness and prayer.

LETTER VII.

INTELLECTUAL SELF-CULTIVATION.

Introduction—Object to be sought in examining one's mental operations. Mode of studying the mind—The infant—Instincts which pass away—and instincts which become fixed principles of belief. Sensation and perception—The nature and the difference of the two. The way in which the power of sensation and perception may be improved, and in which improvement from the right exercise of them may be secured. Conception—What it is—Habits of accuracy in conception, important in acquiring accurate knowledge of the outward world—in enabling us to understand what we read—in regard to reasoning and argument—in regard to correctness of sentiment—vividness of illustration—four rules for acquiring vividness and accuracy of conception, given—conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I am now to speak to you on the subject of intellectual self-cultivation. In doing this, I shall endeavor to present for your conside-

ration some practical sketches from the Philosophy of the mind. I wish you to direct your attention to the examination and analysis of your own minds. I wish this, because I believe it to be important that you should become familiar with the mental operations, which are going on within you. But a question will naturally arise as to the proper way of examining and studying your own minds? In answer to this enquiry, I would say, that your object, in watching the operations of your own minds, should be, to learn, in the first place, what their operations are, and to detect, if possible, in the second place, the laws or principles by which those operations are regulated, or in accordance with which they take place, that so, in the third place, you may put forth your own after efforts for mental improvement, in accordance with these laws or principles.—For example, I was once told, by a young lady, that, after having read over a work upon Ancient History twice, so carefully as to take notes, she could not remember the various events and incidents. Now, suppose that upon watching the operations of her memory

upon other subjects, even upon her household duties, she should find that the memory will retain a great variety of particulars, when they are connected, in her associations, with some one important fact, or event, or operation.— Suppose that she calls to mind the fact, that the most ordinary memory can retain the thousand particulars of daily house keeping, simply because they are divided into clusters, all connecting themselves with a few important transactions. Here then she has discovered a principle or law, by which the memory is regulated and in accordance with which, her own may be improved. Now in her future efforts, she can regulate her course by the knowledge, which she has thus acquired. In her future reading, she can fix upon a few prominent and important results and connect the various incidents and events of history with these. In this way she will be able to recollect all these various incidents and events, either as the causes or the consequences of some important results, either as leading to, growing out of, or flowing from these results. Now this case illustrates precisely my views of studying the

mind properly, and, of course, profitably. In doing this, you perceive there are three distinct points to be particularly aimed at. They are these. First, you are to watch in order to ascertain precisely what the operations of the mind are, as distinguished from each other.—And this is important, for we often confound one operation with another. We see, for example, certain objects or actions, and from what we see, we draw certain conclusions. In attempting to tell what we have seen, we are very apt to confound our perceptions with our conclusions, and detail the latter as though they were the former. So, too, when we hear a report, we often mentally explain that report, put it into language suited to our own mental habits. And then, in telling what another person has said to us, we confound the two operations, and tell what we suppose he meant to say. And as we are liable to mistakes, we may report something very different from what was in the mind of the person, in regard to whom we are making the report. Remember then, that your first object, in studying your own minds, is to ascertain

precisely what the operations of the mind are, as distinguished from each other, and that this is an important point, in regard to which you are constantly exposed to mistake.

The second point to be aimed at, in thus watching the operations of the mind, is to detect, if possible, the law or principle, in accordance with which these various operations take place. This is an important and somewhat difficult point. It is I say important. Take the illustration which I have brought forward. It is important that the young lady should, not only ascertain the fact, that there are some things, which she can remember with ease, while it is difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to remember others, but that she should detect, if possible, the reason, why she can remember the one with more ease than the other. Because, in this reason, she learns the principle or law, in accordance with which the operations of the memory take place. Let this then, be the second point to be aimed at; to detect, if possible, the principle or law in accordance with which the mental operations take place. The third point is to apply this

principle to the regulation of future efforts in mental cultivation. To return again to the same illustration, the young lady, you will perceive, could not be practically benefitted, by simply knowing the reason why she could remember some events much better than others. This knowledge is important only because it may enable her to pursue her studies and efforts at self-improvement with greater success. Would you then pursue the study of your own minds in a proper and a profitable manner? You will aim at three things. You will endeavor, by carefully watching the operations of your own minds, to estimate precisely what they are, to detect if possible, the laws or principles in accordance with which they take place, and then you will apply the knowledge you may gain in the regulation of your efforts after further mental improvement.

I have thus pointed out the general objects to be sought in the examination of your own minds, and, in doing this, have suggested the proper method to be pursued. Let us now look, as far as we may be able, at the mind itself. And, in order to do this, will you bring

up before your mind's eye, an infant as the subject of your analysis, and enquire what of mind you can discover in that helpless being. At the first glance you perceive what may be called, for the sake of convenience, native instincts, which seem to have been given only for the guidance of mere infancy, and which disappear as the mind opens and expands.— For example, the infant is taught by native instincts, in what way to seek its food. This is one of its first efforts. And it does not require time nor instruction, to enable it or to teach it how to do this. And this instinct, which is given to the young of all animals, seems to have been given simply for the guidance of infancy. It passes away and is forgotten, as age increases and new tastes and new capacities, in regard to food, manifest themselves. Instincts given, as it would appear only for immediate use, are what you first notice in children. Soon however, as soon as the child begins to take notice, you may perceive manifestations of other instinctive tendencies, which, instead of passing away with the years of infancy, ripen into fixed principles

of belief, in after life. The most prominent of these, and the only one I shall here notice, is that of an instinctive feeling, that every effect must be produced by some cause. I know it is sometimes said that all that we know of the relation of cause and effect is learned from observation and experience, that we observe that what we regard as causes are usually or generally followed by other events which we regard as effects, that the dropping of a spark of fire into a cask of gunpowder is generally followed by an explosion, while, if we were to drop the same spark into a bank of snow, it would as generally be extinguished, and that therefore, because we have seen and known this we connect them together in our minds as sustaining to each other the relation of cause and effect. All this may be true. For it relates only to our learning to assign particular causes to particular effects. I contend that there is in every infant, a native instinctive feeling; that every effect must have some cause. It may be only from observation, and experience, that we learn to trace out the particular causes, which produce the

particular effects which we may witness. But, if you watch the child that has just begun to take notice, you will perceive that when a noise is made in its hearing, it immediately looks around in every direction, in order to ascertain from whence the sound came. The child may not have learned to use its senses, and it may not therefore be capable of detecting the sound, of ascertaining from whence it proceeds. But the very circumstance of its looking around, shows that there is an instinctive feeling that the sound must have been produced by something without itself, must have had some cause. So in the case supposed—should the child hear the explosion of the cask of gunpowder, he would have an instinctive feeling that there must have been some cause for the explosion. It might not indeed be until after much observation and experience, that he would ascertain the particular cause of this particular effect. Still there is the native instinctive feeling, that every effect must have some cause. This is as natural, and as universal, as the instinct which prompts to seek for food when hungry. This

instinctive feeling, as I should call it, in childhood settles down, as the mind is developed, into a fixed principle of belief. We have discovered then in the infant, instincts given simply for the guidance of infancy, and others given as the foundation of future principles of belief. But in connection with these, our very remarks have implied the existence of the powers, as they are called, of sensation and perception. It is through these sensations and perceptions, that we gain a knowledge of outward things. But it is important to mark the distinction between sensation and perception. — The brain and the nervous system, (for the nerves are but the brain itself extended over the body) the brain and the nervous system, I say, have been called, by some, one great sensorial organ, or the organ of sensation. These nerves are indeed divided into different classes; there are the nerves of sight, of taste, of smell. When these nerves are affected, we experience the particular sensations which are called by these different names. But what is sensation, and what knowledge does it give us? It is simply a change in the state of a

certain class of nerves. You are placed in a parlor, where are some beautiful flowers. You smell these flowers, and are able to name them from their respective peculiarities of flavor.—Here you have been the subject of two operations, sensation and perception. Your nerves of smell, for example, were peculiarly affected. This you felt, this you knew. This is sensation—and this is all there is to sensation. Sensation does not tell you what caused this peculiar affection of the nerves of a particular organ. True, you do, from this sensation, conclude that there is a rose, for example, in the room. You say that your senses give you this knowledge. But it is not so. Your sense of smell has only made you conscious, within yourself, of certain states of pleasure or of pain, certain changes. You have learned to connect these peculiar states with their respective causes. This is perception, and this you see is an intellectual operation—the result of observation and experience—and in regard to which we are liable to deception.

Some suppose that when we refer the particular sensations, which we experience, to

outward objects as the cause of them, we do it only because we have before observed and handled, it may be, similar objects. But this I think is a mistake—for I believe that the instinctive feeling, of which I have spoken, that every effect must have some cause, leads us to refer all our sensations, as effects, to some unknown cause, external to the mind. This I believe to be natural and instinctive. Then, the ascertaining what particular causes produce particular effects, what particular objects produce particular sensations, is the result of observation and experience. And this, the assigning the particular sensations we may experience to particular objects, as their cause, is perception. The more expert and accurate any one becomes in this process, the quicker and the more correct are his perceptions. Let two persons, for example, enter a flower garden. They will both experience the same sensations; they will both smell a variety of different odors. The one, who has not been accustomed to the garden, and who has not been in the practice of tracing these different odors to their respective causes, will only be able to say that he per-

ceives that there are a great variety of different flowers. The other will name over very readily all this variety of different flowers, which he perceives by their different odors.— So of taste; one will name to you every ingredient in a pie or a cake, while another can only say that there are a great variety of spices and other ingredients. So of hearing; two persons are present at a concert. The same sounds are heard by both—that is, the same sensations are experienced by both. But one, from not having cultivated his powers in this respect, knows only that there is a variety of mingled sounds; the other, with no better natural capacities, for that is the supposition, but simply from a greater degree of cultivation in this respect, can distinguish and tell the different voices.

And now what, you may ask, is the practical instruction which you have thus far derived in regard to sensation and perception, and what hints for personal improvement? First, you have learned that sensation is only a change of the nerves. If the body is pricked with a pin, pain is felt; and this is all that there is to sen-

sation. The infant may cry for hours with the pain from a pin in its clothes, and yet gain no knowledge of the cause of the pain. So with older persons, the nerves of smell or of hearing may experience pleasant or unpleasant changes. This is sensation and this, I repeat is all there is to sensation. What improvement may he who is aiming at self-education expect to secure in regard to his sensations? I answer, that he may cultivate the general health of the body. The intenseness of our sensations, our susceptibility to them will vary with our health. The smell and the hearing are often seriously affected, and rendered very obtuse by ill health. So the sight is often rendered very acute, and even painfully sensitive by a diseased state of the body. We are at times peculiarly susceptible to the sensations of cold and heat, in consequence of the peculiar state of our health. Our first care, then, would we have our sensations correct, and be guarded against being deceived by them, should be, to preserve good bodily health.— Would we guard against being deceived, I say, in our sensations. We often are so. An in-

dividual is sometimes ready to pronounce the state of the weather either uncomfortably cold or uncomfortably hot, when, in reality, it is neither. He may honestly believe what he says, but his sensations have deceived him in consequence of his peculiar state of health. First then, you must in your diet and exercise cultivate good bodily health. Otherwise, even your supposed knowledge of things around you may be but a delusion. In the second place, whenever you are in a diseased state of body, you must make an allowance for the influence of disease upon your susceptibility to sensations. And, in the third place, you may form the habit of attending to these sensations. Some people will pass through beautiful scenery and never know it, while others will drink in much pleasure and perhaps derive much instruction while passing through the same scenes and yet, the sensations of both may have been the same, only the one has formed the habit of attending to his sensations, while the other habitually disregards and neglects them. The one perceives things, which the other does not, because he attends to the sens-

ations of which he is the subject, and traces them to their causes, while the other neglects the whole. You can gain personal improvement then, in regard to your sensations, in three ways. By seeking carefully good bodily health, by making all proper allowance for the influence of disease upon your sensations, and by forming the habit of carefully attending to all the various sensations of which you may be the subject.

The second step, in becoming acquainted with objects around you, is the exercise of your native, instinctive feeling, that every effect must have some cause, in tracing out your sensations to their particular causes. And here there is improvement to be sought, in the constancy and care with which this instinctive feeling is exercised. Some are negligent and acquire a habitual negligence in regard to this. They hear a sound. It may be the mew of a cat or the cry of an infant. They are careless and do not trace their sensation to its cause, and can therefore, from the effect of this carelessness, hardly distinguish the one from the other. Consequently, there is always

great confusion in their perceptions. Their perceptions are not clear, and distinct from each other, in their own minds. And this simply because they have become habitually careless in the exercise of their instinctive feeling, that every effect must have a cause, careless in tracing their particular sensations to their appropriate causes. In this step of the process of gaining a knowledge of the outward world, improvement is to be sought in the constancy and care with which you trace sensations to their peculiar and appropriate effects.

The third step, in this process of gaining a knowledge of the outward world, or rather the result of the two previous steps, is perception. I say the result of the two previous steps. For instance, I pass through a meadow, and experience a very peculiar sensation. I stop and trace this to its cause, and find that cause to be the presence of a peculiar flower. Now what have I done? I experience a sensation, a change in the state of the nerves of smell. I obey the native instinctive feeling that there must be a cause for this, and endeavor to

trace out that cause, and the result is that I perceive the flower, that is, I trace the peculiar sensation to an object, as its cause, as the source whence it originated, which my sight tells me is a flower. Perception then, is the result or consequence of sensation, the knowledge which we gain of outward objects, in consequence of the impressions, which these objects make upon the senses. This is peculiarly an intellectual operation, and one in regard to which we are liable to deception.

I remark still further upon the improvement of our powers of perception. The fact should be deeply impressed upon our minds, that these powers are improvable. Let two men look upon a drove of cattle, as they pass. One will be able to tell you very nearly how much each animal, upon which he may look, will weigh, when slaughtered. The other will come nowhere near in his estimates.— And yet, they both look upon the same cattle, see the same peculiarities, and, perhaps, look with the same degree of intensity. Now why does one perceive more than the other? You will perhaps tell me that he does not per-

ceive more, that it is only a case of better judgment, upon a particular point, and that I have introduced an inappropriate illustration. I admit that it is a case of improved judgment. But I contend that it is judgment connected with the powers of perception, which is improved. The case is, that the one who forms a correct estimate, does it, not by guess, not by judgment, resting on no basis. He sees certain points, these points his past experience has taught him are indications of the condition and weight of the animal. That is, he sees, or perceives certain peculiarities; in seeking for the cause of these peculiarities, he has, by his observation, learned that it is the peculiar condition of the animal. Thus, his conclusions in regard to the weight, are so nearly connected with his perceptions that they seem to constitute a part of the improvement, of which the powers of perception are susceptible. At least whatever may be your theory upon the subject, you will admit that it is improvement which is important. For the other person may see, and notice, and speak about these same peculiari-

ties, and yet not draw any correct conclusions from them. But I may take a more obvious case of the actual improvement of the powers of perception. Two persons look upon a painting. The picture of the whole is painted upon the retina of the eye, of the one as well as upon that of the other. But the person who is accustomed to paintings and is fond of them, will perceive a great many more minute, but important points, in the picture, than will the other. The one will notice only the striking and prominent points, while the other will notice the whole. The latter then, will actually see more than the former, simply because he has cultivated the power of perception, in relation to these particular objects.

Let then the truth be distinctly impressed upon your minds, I repeat that the powers of perception may be improved, or rather, that a man may so learn to use his powers of perception, as to become acquainted, through their means, with much more than, without cultivation, he would have been. And now, how are we to improve these powers? In

the first place, we must pay attention to the objects of our senses. Why is it that one sees more particulars in a landscape than another? The same scene is presented to the eye of both, the same picture is upon the retina of the eye of both. But the one pays attention to the different separate objects included in the group. We have the power when a collection of sounds strike upon the ear, or a group of objects is presented to the eye, of singling out any one of these sounds or objects, and dwelling upon it for the time to the exclusion of others. The musician can, amidst a great variety of sounds, follow a particular part. So one can dwell upon a particular point, or feature in a picture, to the neglect of the rest. But if, by the exercise of attention, we can single out any one sound or object and dwell upon it, then we can follow this process through a great variety of separate objects, directing the attention to them, one by one. In this particular, there is much difference in the characters of individuals. Some will look upon a picture or a landscape, and pronounce in general terms

that it is beautiful, but can, after all, give no account of the particulars, of which the beautiful group was composed. Another will describe accurately all the various particulars, point out all the peculiar beauties and excellences. And he will acquire such a facility in doing this, as to pronounce, at once, upon the first view or perception of an object. How is this power or facility acquired? I have said, by directing the attention to the various particulars, one by one. Take a child before it is acquainted with the Alphabet, and learn it to read pictures, that is to point out all the parts of a picture and to tell what each individual in the group, whether man or animal is doing. In this way I have seen even a young child, make a picture book quite a study. You may go further and accustom the child to compare one picture with another, one horse or dog with another, and to point out why one animal, flower or tree is beautiful, and why another is not.— In this way, you form the habit of acquiring clear, distinct and accurate perceptions. And not only so, these perceptions become fixed

in the mind, so that the child can think of them and see them with the mind's eye when away from them. I have been pleased with the course pursued by some teachers of writing. They first, before children are old enough to begin to write, write themselves on the black board, making some letters properly, and some incorrectly, and then they exercise the children in telling which are right and which wrong, what constitutes the correctness of the one and the incorrectness of the other. In this way the children form the habit of particularity and accuracy in perceptions, acquire clear ideas of what the forms of letters should be, and know, when they begin to write, what they wish to make. I have here referred only to the improvement of the perceptive powers of children. But we can, each of us, at any age, improve our perceptive powers. I once visited the exhibition of paintings at the Athenæum in Boston. I procured a season ticket when I first went in, and gazed around upon the whole, thought it was all very well, but was not particularly struck, saw nothing very beautiful or very

wonderful. But I took opportunities, when the hall was emptied, at the dinner hours, to spend two hours a day, two or three times a week there. I pursued the course I have suggested for the improvement of children, that is, I studied each painting, examined all the various objects, inquired into all the various beauties or defects, compared one with another. And what was the consequence? The hall soon became to me the source of great pleasure. The exhibition increased in interest at every new examination. And I acquired to a slight degree, a new taste, a new power, a new susceptibility to happiness. Now what is the instruction of a case like this? what was done, and what must be done in order to improve our perceptive powers? First, there must be the fixing of the attention upon each particular in any object of perception. Then follows the enquiry as to the correctness or incorrectness, the beauty or deformity of each part, and the reasons of the one feature or the other. Then this must be impressed upon the mind, so that a clear and distinct idea can be carried away. I have

illustrated by a reference to objects of sight, I will give one more illustration from sound. It is possible to improve our powers of perception in this respect, to acquire a susceptibility to music, not originally possessed. Take a person who has no ear for music, who knows not one tune from another, not even one note from another. By this, it is not meant that he does not feel and perceive the difference between a high note and a low one, between a spirit-stirring martial air, and a plaintive tune. But he does not know the names appropriated to the one and the other. He may not, at those points where they run into each other, be able to distinguish accurately the one from the other. But, let him pursue the course I have pointed out, in regard to paintings, fix his attention upon the different notes and tunes, as they succeed each other, watch their adaptation to the sentiment they are intended to convey, and compare one with another. Let him do this, and he will soon find himself becoming deeply interested. Although not naturally a musician, he will take pleasure in music. He may not be able to use the tech-

nical terms and phrases, he may not be able to mark and carry in his mind all the peculiarities of particular tunes. But he will have so improved his powers of perception in regard to sound, that music will have charms for his soul. And, while doing this, he will have acquired also the power of judging in regard to the modulation of the voice, in speaking, and he may even go further and connect with this the right management of his own voice. I have thus, my young friends, pointed out the way of improving our perceptive powers. And that is by directing the attention to the various sensations of which we may be the subjects, and by studying and examining these separately and comparing them, one with another.

I have thus, my young friends, directed your attention to the subjects of sensation and perception.

In other words, to the means and powers of acquiring a knowledge of the outward world. I have pointed out some modes of improving these powers, and of gathering improvement from the exercise of them.—

That is, I have directed your attention to the formation of correct habits of observation. My object has been, to urge upon you the importance, and to point out to you the way, of acquiring habits of particularity and accuracy, in your observation of outward objects. I suspect that you would be surprised at the vagueness and indistinctness of your ideas of outward objects, even of the objects most familiar to you, which are directly around you, or lie by the side of your path, and which you every day notice. I well recollect, that, as one of our exercises, while acquiring an education, we were called upon to define or describe some of the most common objects around us. We were to describe them accurately, so that any one, from reading our description, would know the object, as soon as he might meet with it, although he might never have seen it before. We were required to give such a description, also, that the object might be distinguished, by the description, from other objects nearly resembling it. And I well remember too, how much we all failed in our attempts at first.

How vague and general and inaccurate were our descriptions. And I presume that if any one of my readers were now to make a similar attempt, you would be surprised at your failure, at your vagueness and inaccuracy. And, in order to perfect your habits of observation, and the accuracy of your knowledge of the outward world, I would suggest the importance of occasional exercises of this kind, describing the various objects with which you are familiar. Almost every young man amongst us, will find occasional leisure moments, which might be employed, and that right profitably, in exercises of this kind.— There are many times a few unoccupied moments, when you would not think of engaging in any important effort of writing, or even of reading, when you could make out short descriptions of different objects, or different scenes, with which you are familiar, striving to make the description particular, accurate and discriminating.

In attempting to do this, to describe accurately the things you have seen, you will find another mental power brought into operation,

called, by writers upon the subject the power of conception. By the term conception is meant the power or faculty of bringing up distinctly and vividly before the mind's eye, objects which have been witnessed by the bodily eye.

An individual undertakes to paint a portrait of a deceased friend. While doing this, the appearance of that friend, in all his peculiar features, is as distinctly before the mind's eye, as ever the friend himself was before the bodily eye. You may perhaps have passed up through the Notch of the White Hills. Suppose that you were at this time to lay aside the book and after a lapse of many months, perhaps even of years, attempt to describe the appearance of the scene. Would not the whole stand out before your mind's eye, with all the vividness and distinctness, with which the scene itself did originally before your bodily eye? This is what we mean by conception. You may call it a distinct power, or a peculiar state of activity in any or in all the organs. Still, here is the fact, and the calling this fact by one name or another, the

accounting for it in one way or in its opposite, will not effect the fact itself, nor the practical instruction to be derived from it. This power of conception is not a power, called into exercise wholly by, nor confined in its operations entirely to the objects around us. Still, it is a power, the right cultivation and improvement of which, is of so much importance to the perfection of our knowledge of the outward world, that I may be justified in dwelling upon it here.

The power of conception is now the subject of notice. I have pointed out what it is. The bringing up before the mind's eye scenes or events, with all the same vividness and distinctness, with which they were once presented to the bodily senses.

I have said that the power of conception is very important, in regard to our knowledge of the outward world. Suppose you visit the White Mountains and view the beautiful scenery which is there. You derive pleasure from the sight. But you wish to bring away some idea of the place, for future use and enjoyment. This you can do

only by forming distinct conceptions of the place. You cannot, when away, recall the place itself before your bodily eye. But, if you have a clear and distinct idea of the place, or, what is the same thing, if you have a clear and distinct conception, or picture of the place, this picture you can call up before the mind's eye. So after you have attended a concert, you can never recall the sounds, that is, you can never, by an act of the memory, make the sounds actually strike upon the ear, so as to renew the sensation and perception. But you may form such a conception of the sounds, as to recall and enjoy them long after the time of the concert. Have you taken the tour of our own country, visited the falls of Niagara at the north, the great waters of the west, or the sunny climes of the south? And what of all this, have you brought back? Nothing but the conceptions you have formed. If you have formed clear and distinct conceptions, you have your mind stored with pictures, which you can call up for future use or pleasure. The forming of distinct and vivid concep-

tions of outward objects, is the last step in our knowledge of the outward world. Here we are placed among a thousand objects. They strike our senses, so to speak, and produce sensations. This is the first step. We trace these sensations to their causes, and perceive the several objects which produce them. Then we form within ourselves clear and distinct conceptions of these objects of perception. And now we have something which we can carry away with us, which we can recall, and use for our improvement. It is our intellectual property.

It is important that you cultivate habits of distinct, vivid and accurate conception. Let us look, for a moment, at some of the advantages resulting from such a habit. Have you not noticed a great difference in the conversation of different men in regard to the same scenes and events. Two men shall take the tour of Europe. One will bring back only general, vague and confused accounts of what he has seen. The other will entertain you, for the hour together, by an animated and lively description of the vari-

ous places he had visited. And now why this difference? It may be owing in part to a difference in habits of observation. For there can be no accurate conception of objects and scenes, unless there is first accuracy in observing these objects and scenes. But there may be accuracy of observation, while there is a want of accuracy in conception. I think we all experience something of this. When we enter a cabinet of minerals, we may examine a great variety of specimens, and may examine them carefully, but, by not pausing, after the examination of each specimen, and thinking over or repeating over mentally the peculiar features by which it is distinguished, we may find that the result of our examination of the whole, is but vague and confused, that, although we examined carefully, we have no clear conceptions of the different objects which we have examined. So we may enter a debating club, and listen attentively to a succession of different speakers. But, by neglecting to pause, at the close of each one's remarks, and repeat over mentally the sum of his arguments, we shall find that our concep-

tions of the various parts are confounded with each other, and our recollection of the whole is confused and indistinct. So with the traveller, he may have examined carefully the various scenes he has visited. But, being filled with wonder, or being hurried on from one scene to another, he may neglect to form clear ideas of each separate scene, and consequently, the result is a vague and confused notion of the whole. This may be illustrated in still another way. Two travellers visit the same scenes, and one records upon the spot the peculiarities of each scene. The other leaves this record of his impressions to be made out at some future leisure moment. But what will be the consequence of these two different courses. Will not the one have clear and accurate notes of his travels, while the other has only vague and indistinct recollections. So one may pause, at each scene, and dwell upon it in thought, repeat over mentally the various impressions which are made upon him. The other may leave the exercise until a leisure and convenient time. And what will be the consequence? The one will have distinct

and vivid conceptions, the other vague and confused notions. And the marked difference will be manifest in all their descriptions whether given verbally or in writing. Now, my young friends, the person who is aiming at self-education, will desire improvement in every thing, which can contribute to his own happiness, or to the happiness of others. And must not the vividness and distinctness of our conceptions contribute to our own happiness? Must not the traveller revisit, in thought the places over which he has passed, with more pleasure, provided his conceptions of them be distinct and vivid, than he could if all was indistinct and confused? And we all know that he who can give a lively and animated description of the places he has visited, and of the scenes which he has witnessed, has, at his command, powerful means of conferring happiness on those with whom he may associate. You perceive the importance of clear, accurate and vivid conceptions, as lying at the foundation of the talent for lively description.

The habit of vividness and accuracy in our conceptions is of vast importance, in enabling

us to understand readily what we read. If, for example, you have formed these habits, if you are careful to form accurate conceptions of the objects and scenes around you, and can describe these objects and scenes in a lively and animated manner, then you can enter into a lively and animated description, when given by another. The words, which you would have yourself used, to convey distinct and vivid conceptions, will call up in your mind ideas and conceptions, of corresponding vividness and distinctness when used by another. If you have been an accurate observer of nature, you will find that well written descriptions of natural scenery will call up in your mind vivid ideas. But if you have not been careful in your observance of nature, these descriptions will be to you, dull and uninteresting. So if, after having observed carefully the objects of nature, you neglect to form distinct conceptions of them, the effect will be the same.—These descriptions will be dry and uninteresting. Says a writer upon this subject, Rev. Jacob Abbot, “Both the enjoyment and the improvement, which is derived from reading,

depend very much on this habit." One person will read a narrative, such an one for instance, as the story of Robinson Crusoe, and the mental pictures, which the descriptions bring up in his mind are cold and meagre and barren. Nothing comes to view, which is not expressly described and even that is very faintly and confusedly sketched by the mind. In the case of another individual, all is clear and distinct. The slight sketch, which the description gives, is filled up by the imagination, drawn from the stores of distinct and vivid conception. So that, while the printed words, which meet the eye in both cases, are the same, the real scenes, to which they introduce the reader are entirely dissimilar. This is one great cause of the differences of opinion, about the interest excited by a story. One reader praises and another condemns. They speak of the book. But the real object of the censure and of the praise is, on the one hand, the meagre conceptions of one who has not sought for habits of accuracy and vividness of conception, and on the other the glowing pictures, which are formed by more cultivated powers

of conception. And the habit of forming distinct and vivid conceptions, will not only increase the interest with which we read, but it will cause what we read to be much more strongly impressed upon the memory.

But this habit, when once formed, extends not merely to outward objects, not merely to passages of descriptive writing. It extends to every thing, which can be the object of thought. It is therefore of great advantage even in reasoning and argument. You sometimes hear a man, in debate, arguing feebly. His premises are not set forth in the most distinct and prominent manner, and perhaps he forgets to draw his inferences, or draws them from wrong points in his premises. Why is this? You may say, from a want of discrimination. But from what does this want of discrimination arise? Is it not often, from the want of distinct and clear conceptions? If the premises of an argument do not stand out distinctly to our mind's eye, in all their fulness, reality and distinctness we cannot discriminate between the circumstances which are important and those which are unimportant, and, consequently, it is often

the case, that feeble reasoning proceeds in part from indistinct conceptions. We all know too, how much an argument is often aided by apt and familiar illustrations. An illustration is not a proof, but it is often the case, that a good illustration makes the proof more distinctly visible and more deeply felt. And we know too, that busied as men are with the outward and the visible, whatever is set forth, in the abstract, loses half of its power, unless rendered clear by appropriate illustrations. And we see a great difference in different writers in this respect. While some deal in mere abstract and general propositions, others impart to these propositions, by their own powers of accurate observation and conception, a living reality and clothe them with breathing and animated beauty. But, as particularity and accuracy of observation are necessary, so particularity and accuracy of conceptions, are necessary to this power of illustration. I presume that in the religious community, there are few writings, which have been more generally and extensively popular, than the writings of the Messrs Abbots. But what gives them this

popularity? It is not that there is any thing very original or profound in the works themselves. It is not that they contain more or better thoughts than the writings of others. Why then is it? It is because they contain familiar, and, in many cases, highly appropriate illustrations of truths, which had before been regarded as peculiarly abstruse and difficult of comprehension. And yet, I have heard these books complained of, on account of their style. Says one, I can at once form a distinct conception of the truth or position he wishes to establish, and I dislike to spend too much time in reading the illustration of a truth, of which I have already a distinct conception. But such a remark you perceive must proceed from one who has cultivated distinctness and accuracy of conception. And the reason why they are so generally interesting is, because the greater portion of men have not cultivated this power of conception, and, wish, therefore, to have all the truths and propositions illustrated by pictures, that shall stand out to the mind's eye, in distinctness. But where did the Messrs Abbots acquire the

power of lively and animated illustration? Was it not first, from habits of accuracy in observation? Was it not in the second place, from habits of accuracy in conception? This habit of painting vividly, before the mind's eye, scenes, objects and events which are absent, is of great importance in reasoning and argument and in the illustration of abstract truth.

Once more, this habit is of great importance in the study of human nature, of mankind.—How often do we hear it said of a fellow man, he is an exceedingly amiable man, a man of talents and learning, but he has no knowledge of human nature, no knowledge of men. And this want of a knowledge of human nature renders all his knowledge and talents and learning useless. And it often happens too, that this want of a knowledge of human nature, does not arise from not having mingled much in society; I have seen it as strongly indicated in the characters of those who have been always in society, as in those who have lived in solitude. It arises from want of habits of accuracy, in observation, and from want of habits of distinctness and vividness in conception.

Some men will spend an hour in the company of another, and when they are alone they will think over all that was said, and, in this way, they will form a distinct conception of the character, and ever afterwards they know how to meet and how to treat such a man. Others might spend the same time, and although they might perceive the peculiarities of the man, yet they form no conceptions of him, because they do not think of him as absent, and thinking of him as absent, form clear and distinct conceptions of these peculiarities of character, they do not fix in their own minds clear ideas of his feelings, principles, and general conduct, so as to draw a correct conclusion as to the way in which he is to be met. It is then the exercise of this same power of conception, which enables one to acquire, in his intercourse with the world, a clear and distinct knowledge of human nature, not only of the general characteristics of men, but of the peculiarities of each particular man. And it is the neglect of this same exercise, which prevents another from acquiring, from the same intercourse with the world, the same knowledge.

I have thus pointed out, at some length, some of the various advantages of habits of accuracy and distinctness in conception. I have wished to awaken in every one a determination, which will lead him to strive after self-improvement in this particular. How then are we to seek improvement. My first answer has been hinted at in what I have already said. When you have noticed a peculiar object or scene, pause, shut the object or scene from your bodily eye, and think over, mentally, to yourself, all its peculiarities. The object or scene then becomes to you an object of conception, instead of an object of perception. It is transferred from the perception of the bodily senses, to the possession of the mind, as its own property, to be retained and used as occasion may require. I recollect that when engaged in teaching, I had one pupil, who excelled all others for his readiness and accuracy in memory. If when reciting his Latin, I stated for further use, a new rule, I found that one single statement of the rule would be sufficient for him, while to the others, I must state the same, day after day, be-

fore they could repeat it themselves familiarly and accurately. As he was, in other respects, very much like other boys, I became extremely anxious to know the cause of his peculiarity in this particular. I watched and found that, when I mentioned a new rule, instead of hearing it and then dismissing it from his mind, he dwelt upon it, and by repeating over mentally to himself, what I had said, fixed it in his own mind at the time, then and ever after to be his own property. He made it his own mental possession. Now if, after visiting any scene, we could thus pause and mentally repeat to ourselves its peculiar features, then might we have the mental picture of the scene, distinctly before the mind's eye to be stored away. But this, you will say, we have not time to do. Being called to devote our attention to business, you cannot make your own mental improvement the principal object of effort.

This may be so, and I would therefore, recommend another practice as a substitute. In a work upon the study and practice of the law, I find the following direction given as an

aid in the cultivation of the memory. I would bring it forward in this place, as having an important bearing upon the subject upon which I am now speaking. "Suppose," says the author, "you have been in several places, and conversed with several persons, in the course of the day. It will be a good practice, to recall at night, with minuteness, not only the names of these places and persons, and the occasions that induced these events, but the subjects of conversations, in which you may have engaged, together with the various opinions, both of yourself and of others, upon these subjects, even in the very words, or as nearly as possible." Now what is accomplished by this practice? Is it not precisely what I have been recommending, the formation of a habit of readily securing mental pictures, of all that has passed before you, and of fixing them in the mind, as its own property, in other words the forming of habits of particularity and accuracy in your conceptions of what may be presented to your senses. I would then recommend this practice as a substitute for the former. For, if you cannot turn aside from

your business, to dwell upon particular scenes and events, you can at least, devote a few moments, each night, to thus bringing up before you, mental pictures of whatever has passed during the day. And a few weeks practice will give you great readiness and accuracy in this. I would repeat, as my third answer, a suggestion which I have already made, the importance of writing, from time to time, descriptions of objects of natural scenery, or events with which you are familiar. And, in describing objects of natural scenery, it would be a good practice to test the distinctness and accuracy of your description, by an attempt to draw, with the pencil, the outlines of the object described, simply from the description given. Try, for example, to describe in writing a particular place you have visited, so that a painter might make out an accurate representation of the place, solely from your description. This exercise may occasionally aid you in your efforts after the habits I am recommending.

Another answer, which I would give is, that, in reading, you should occasionally pause and

make an effort to paint distinctly to the mind, the scenes described by your author. Think of it as a reality, and dwell upon it, until you have completed it in its details and made all its parts consistent with one another, and with the whole. Practice of this kind will soon lead to decided improvement. This may be done simply for the purpose of increasing our enjoyment of what we read. But it will greatly increase our store of mental treasures, our store of mental pictures. Mr. Abbot, in his "Young Christian," recommends this practice in the reading of the scriptures. And it is a most important recommendation. Suppose you read the account of the raising of Lazarus instead of passing hastily over it, pause and picture the whole scene to your mind's eye, bring up Mary and Martha, their Jewish friends, the eager haste with which Martha runs, the group around the grave, the solemn attitude and accents of prayer, the lifting of the stone, the mingled pleasure and astonishment of the sisters, as the form of Lazarus, in his grave clothes, rises before them, if, in this way, you will picture out the various scenes

described, you will render the book itself doubly interesting, you will gain a clearer idea of the true spirit of our Saviour's teaching, as illustrated by the circumstances in which he was placed, and you will be strengthening this habit of clearness and accuracy of conception. And this book which is in the hands of most, is, perhaps as well calculated to aid us in the formation of this habit as any that we could read.

I have in this letter, my young friends, directed your attention to what I regard as important steps in self-cultivation. I would hope that you will carefully weigh the suggestions I have offered.

LETTER VIII.

INTELLECTUAL SELF-CULTIVATION.

Subject stated—Abstraction—The term defined and illustrated—The natural exercise of this power depending upon the peculiar tastes and habits of the individual—Its exercise may be improved and rendered more directly subject to the will by mental cultivation—It is employed in classification and generalization—These illustrated by quotations from Abbott's *Abercrombie*—The application of these powers to individual improvement—in the study of natural objects—in reading Fables—in reading Biography—in reading History—The best mode of strengthening and improving this power—illustrated by reference to reading and examining a book in all its various particulars separately—This power improved by dwelling upon some one characteristic while reading Biography, and following it out into all the various particulars of life—Conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I have spoken, in my last letter, of some of the powers of the mind employed in gaining a knowledge of the outward world, and of the ways, in which they may be improved,

and in which improvement may be gained by the proper exercise of them. There is another mental power, which is of great importance in the same connection. It is called *abstraction*, by writers on Mental Philosophy. It is the power, which the mind possesses, of directing the attention to some one quality of an object, to the neglect of other and equally obvious qualities. You are presented, for example, with a flower, beautiful in color, and agreeable in odour. Here are two obvious and striking qualities of the flower presented, through your senses, to the mind. The one is equally obvious with the other. But just at this time, you are engaged in painting, and especially in painting flowers. This circumstance causes that the appearance, the form and the color of the flower, should attract more particular attention. You may desire to copy the flower in your paintings, and, consequently, you may observe very carefully, and examine very accurately all its peculiarities of form and color, without noticing its peculiarities of odour. In doing this, you have been exercising the power of abstraction. That

is, you have withdrawn your attention, almost entirely, from one obvious quality of the flower, and confined it to another equally, but no more obvious quality. It may be, that another person, looking upon the same flower, would find the attention directed principally to the odor, and would exercise the same power of abstraction in attending to that, to the neglect of the form and color. In these cases the attention seems to be fastened upon particular qualities, not so much from a direct effort of the will as from the peculiar taste, circumstances or occupation of the individual. Nor is there any effort to exclude attention to other qualities. They naturally lose their hold upon the mind and gradually disappear, when the thoughts are directed strongly and earnestly to some one point or quality. We see instances in proof of this almost every day of our lives. Suppose that several individuals take a walk out upon a commanding eminence, on some bright and beautiful summer evening, in order that from such an eminence, they may watch the setting sun. They all gaze upon the same object, the same scene. But their attention

is directed to different particulars, in that scene, and their thoughts and emotions are widely different, in accordance with their different states of mind. They have all, naturally and perhaps without being themselves aware of it, exercised the power of abstraction. That is, each individual has directed his attention to some particulars or to some qualities in the scene to the neglect of others. And the particulars or qualities, to which the attention of each individual has been directed, have been determined by the previous states of their minds. Nor has any individual made any effort to shut out other qualities from the attention. They have naturally disappeared. This supposed case may be regarded as illustrating that degree of abstraction, which is natural, and the peculiar character of which is determined by each one's peculiar tastes, and mental development, or by his peculiar studies and occupations.

But there is another manifestation of this same power, which is the result of effort and cultivation, and is, to a degree, under the control of the will. I may read a book, for exam-

ple, with a determination, formed before reading, to direct my attention to some one particular quality of the book, to the neglect of other equally obvious qualities. I may determine that I will read the book, with reference alone to its style, to the neglect of the question whether the sentiments and opinions advanced be correct or not. And I may be pleased with the style, although perhaps the sentiments may be opposed to my own. This is the exercise of abstraction, and it is put forth, at the direct control of the will. I sit down, with the determination to attend to one particular quality, to the neglect of others; and I attend to this quality, because I had previously determined that I would do so.— I have said that this degree of the power depends upon efforts to cultivation. You find that children, when new objects are presented, seem to look in wonder and admiration. But their thoughts are directed to no one point; their attention passes rapidly from one point or one peculiarity to another. But mental cultivation, an attention to study, and the confining the thoughts for some time to one subject, have an effect to give this power.

I have thus pointed out what we are to understand by abstraction, in its natural and in its cultivated and improved state. It is the power of attending to some one quality in an object, to the neglect of other equally obvious qualities. You will perceive, from what has been said, that there is a natural capacity for this. I do not mean a distinct and separate mental faculty, but I mean that man has naturally, to a certain degree, that power of self-government by which he is enabled to exercise abstraction. But you will have perceived also, from what has been said, that the perfection of this power depends much upon self-cultivation and mental habits.

This power of the mind is one, the right cultivation of which, is of great practical importance, not merely to scholars and men of learning but to every man in all the ordinary circumstances and occupations of life. It is employed in the classification of objects, or of the various particulars of our knowledge and in that way is of great assistance to the memory. It is employed in what may be called generalization or the gathering up of

general truths from the observation of particular facts. By classification I mean the arranging various objects under one general class, according to their resemblance in some one particular quality. Our promptness and accuracy in doing this, depends upon the degree to which the power of abstraction is cultivated. Because we cannot classify objects according to their resemblance in some one particular, without exercising the power of abstraction in attending to that particular in all the various objects classed together, to the neglect of other equally obvious qualities in regard to which they may differ from each other. "This process of classification is of so great practical importance that it deserves to be carefully considered" and clearly illustrated. "A person has made a large collection of sea shells which lie promiscuously on the tables before him. He proposes to classify them. Let us suppose the property he first examines is color. He looks over the whole and takes out all that are spotted and places them by themselves. He next takes all that are white and forms another class,

and so on, arranging them in classes according as they agree in the property of color. Or they might in the same way be classified with reference to any other property or, as the more common phrase is, or any other principle. Take, for example, form. All those which are in two parts, as the oyster, clam, &c., might be arranged by themselves in one class, and those which consist of a single part in another class. These classes might be easily subdivided on the same principle, with reference to form alone. All the spiral shells might form one class, the conical ones another, and those of a different form still, a third. This would be classifying them on the principle of form. Now it must be observed that this classification would entirely break up and destroy the other. For the spotted shells which were before arranged together in one class would now be scattered among several according to their various forms."

You perceive that in arranging their classes the individual exercised the power of abstraction; that is, he directed the attention

according to the first supposition to the particular property of color, to the neglect of equally obvious properties, and upon the second supposition he directed the attention to the property of form, to the neglect of other equally obvious properties. You will notice that "the principle of classification which is adopted in regard to any collection of individuals may be varied almost indefinitely. Shells, for example, might be classified with reference to the habits of the animals. All which lived in fresh water might form one class and salt water shells another. Each of these might be subdivided according to the food and habits of the animal. Or the principle of classification might be geographical. Those from Africa might be placed upon one shelf, those from Asia on another, and American specimens on a third." The principle might be varied almost indefinitely. "In determining the principle of classification to be adopted in any case that is the property or peculiarity in which those placed together are to be similar, we cannot have regard to the object in view. These remarks naturally

lead to the following practical rules which are worthy of very careful consideration, since there is perhaps no process a thorough knowledge of which is more essential to a well disciplined mind than classification.

1. In determining upon a principle of classification there should be a careful regard to the object in view in making the classification itself.

2. The classes should be bounded by as distinct and well defined limits as the nature of the case will allow.

3. The classes should be such as to include all the individuals, so that every individual object classed shall belong to some one or other of them.

4. The classification when completed should be considered in its true light, as an artificial arrangement resorted to merely as a matter of convenience, and therefore not a proper subject for angry disputes”.

I have thus quoted at some length, from Abbott's edition of Abercrombie's *Inquiries on the intellectual Powers*, an explanation and an illustration of the process of classifi-

cation are well adapted to render the subject clear and to shew its importance.

I have said that the power of abstraction is employed in the process of generalization. I will quote upon this point from the same author.

“Generalization is to be distinguished from classification, though the mental process concerned is in both essentially the same. We class together a certain number of substances by a property in which they agree, and in doing so we specify and enumerate the individual substances included in the class. Thus we may take a number of substances differing widely in their external and mechanical properties; some being solid, some fluid, and some gaseous, and say they are all acids. The class being thus formed and consisting of a defined number of substances which agree in the property of acidity, we may next investigate some other property which is common to all the individuals of the class, and belongs to no other, and say for example, that all acids redden vegetable blues. The former of these operations is properly classi-

fied, the latter is generalizing in reference to the class. In the former we take, or exclude individual substances according as they possess or not, the property on which the classification rests. In performing the latter, the property which is assumed, must belong to all the individuals without a single exception, or if it does not it must be abandoned as a general fact, or general principle in regard to the class. For in Physical science to talk of exceptions to a general rule, is only to say in other words that the rule is not general. If one acid were discovered which does not redden vegetable blues, it would belong to a history of these substances, to state that a certain number of them have this property. But the property of reddening vegetable blues would require to be abandoned as a general fact, or general principle applicable to the class of acids.

“A general law, or general principle, then, is nothing more than a general fact, or a fact which is invariably true of all the individual cases to which it professes to apply. Deducing such facts is the great object of modern

science ; and it is by this peculiar character that it is distinguished from the ancient science of the schools, the constant aim of which was to discover causes. The general law of gravitation, for example, is nothing more than the general fact, or fact invariably true, that all bodies when left unsupported fall to the ground. There were at one time certain apparent exceptions to the universality of this law, namely, in some very light bodies, which were not observed to fall. But a little farther observation showed that these are prevented from falling by being lighter than the atmosphere, and that in vacuo they observe the same law as the heaviest bodies. The apparent exceptions being thus brought under the law, it became general, namely, the fact universally true, that all unsupported bodies fall to the ground. Now, of the cause of this phenomenon we know nothing; and what we call the general law, or general principle of gravitation, is nothing more than a universal fact, or a fact that is true without a single exception. But having ascertained the fact to be invariably and universally true, we as-

sume it as a part of the established order of nature, and proceed upon it with as much confidence as if we knew the mysterious agency on which the phenomenon depends. The establishment of the fact as universal brings us to that point in the inquiry which is the limit of our powers and capacities, and it is sufficient to the purposes of science. On the same principle, it is familiar to every one that extensive discoveries have been made in regard to the properties and laws of heat; but we do not know what heat is, whether a distinct essence, or, as has been supposed by some philosophers, a peculiar motion of the minute atoms of bodies."

Here you have an illustration of the nature and process of generalization or the gathering up of general facts and general principles from the examination of particular cases. This process you will at once perceive to be one of the most important operations of the mind.

But there is a source of error in the exercise of generalization, which it is important should be pointed out, and guarded against,

and that is, the danger of drawing general conclusions from a limited examination of particular cases. You may have met with politicians, who are governed not by the noble feelings of Patriotism, but by selfishness and personal ambition alone. And, from your slight acquaintance with a few of this class you may adopt, as a general principle, that every politician may be hired and has his price. This is a hasty adoption of a general principle. It may hold true of some individuals, and not true of others. So you may have met with some, who, under the cloak of high religious professions and pretensions, have proved to be dishonest, trickish knaves, and you immediately generalize upon these cases, and adopt as a general fact or truth, that all who make pretensions to religion are hypocrites and knaves. Here you perceive that you have not been sufficiently extensive and careful in your examination of particulars. You have drawn a general conclusion from too limited a number of particulars. In this way we are every day liable to error, and we should be ever on our guard. We see this in the books of English travellers in America. They notice peculiar

and uncouth habits and practices in some, it may be, in most, with whom they may meet. This they have a perfect right to say in their published accounts. But, instead of doing this, they draw a general conclusion from particular parts, and say that Americans, speaking generally, are marked by their peculiar and uncouth habits. And consequently with much careful observation, their books are full of assertions calculated to give false impressions, from their incorrect habits of generalizing. Remember then the danger, that you are prone to draw a general conclusion from too limited an examination of particular facts. Again, we are in danger of referring our conclusions, our general deductions, to circumstances in the particular cases, which we have examined, with which they have nothing to do. For example, a Physician finding that a particular kind of food promoted the health of a certain patient in a particular disorder, laid it down as a general principle, that that kind of food is beneficial in that particular disorder, without any further examination of particulars. But, upon ordering that in another case, it

proves injurious. He perceives that his principle will not hold good. But, as one of the patients is a Dutchman and the other a Frenchman, he lays it down as a principle, that that particular kind of food, when given in that particular disorder, will prove beneficial to Dutchmen but injurious to Frenchmen.

This is probably a fictitious anecdote; but it serves to illustrate the position that we may draw our general conclusions from circumstances in the facts which we examine, with which they have no connection.

I have now spoken of Abstraction, Classification, and Generalization. They are nearly connected, and yet they differ somewhat.—The general remarks, however, upon their uses and the mode of cultivating and acquiring them, may apply to all three.

And in regard to the practical application of these powers to the business of life:—I remark first, that the proper exercise of them lies at the foundation of all science. He who exercises them correctly possesses a philosophic mind, and will be constantly making improvement. But how so? Because, I

answer, that improvement depends not so much on a knowledge of particular facts, as upon an ability to seize upon, understand and apply the principles in accordance with which those facts take place or are classed. Two individuals go out into the fields; they perceive the same objects; the one, not having been accustomed to exercise the powers of which I am speaking, tries to store away in his mind accurate ideas of all the particular objects which he sees. With great powers of memory, he may be successful in this, though the probability is that he will fail. But even should he be successful; he has only a store of separate, disconnected facts. He can name them and talk about them, but he can draw from them no general principles or philosophical conclusions. The other has formed the habits of Abstraction, Classification and Generalization; and consequently these various facts and objects arrange themselves in his mind into certain classes, according to their resemblances in certain particulars. The objects of the vegetable world arrange themselves under the principles of

the science of Botany. The stones, which lie scattered around, arrange themselves under the principles of Mineralogy. When he meets with a new plank or a new stone, he exercises the power of abstraction, and confines the attention to the examination of some one important quality ; then he knows at once where to class these separate objects, and finally he gathers up from this examination and classification some general part or principle, in regard to which he can reason, and by the application of which, he can proceed in the investigation of new parts or objects. Thus you perceive that while the mind of one is filled with a vast store of confused facts, that of the other resembles a well arranged cabinet, each idea is placed in the class where it properly belongs, and the class is labelled so as to be ready for use. These powers then lie at the foundation of all science in regard to natural objects. And the scientific classification of natural objects affords the means of gathering further information and improvement. Why was it that Franklin made the progress and the discoveries, which

are attributed to him? It was not on account of his superior advantages, for he was but a poor printer's boy. His superiority arose from his philosophical cast of mind, from his habitual exercise of the powers, of which I have been speaking. Facts were with him as they will be with every one who has formed the habits of Abstraction, Classification and Generalization, important, not as facts merely, but as illustrative of certain principles, laws or truths.

How are these powers applied to promote improvement by reading? In answer to this question I must speak of different kinds of reading. And first, how are they to be applied to the reading of parables and fables? Take the parables of our Saviour. What are these? Supposed cases. An individual is supposed to be placed in certain circumstances and to conduct in a certain way. They are the supposed facts. The question is, how do these supposed facts indicate principles? The careless and unphilosophical reader will treasure up only the facts, these he will remember and may talk about, and, in re-

gard to these, he will express his feelings and opinions. But this you see can be of no great advantage to himself or to others.—Another will gather from these supposed facts the principles whose existence they indicate and will treasure them up as the guide of his future thoughts and actions. In this way some may read fictitious writings to their own profit, provided they do not read to excess, provided they do not let the fascinations of the fiction draw them away from an attention to principles and truth. Fictitious writings are the most difficult of all writings, if you intend to read profitably; because the excitement of the story and the plot carry you along so rapidly as to lead you to neglect to seek for the principles which are bodied forth in these fictions. You are carried along with the story, you remember the story, but you do not gather up the important principles, which are intended to be illustrated. That is, this is the case with highly wrought and deeply intricate fictions. This objection does not weigh so heavily against fables and parables because in these the moral truth stands out more prominently

to view, and you are not carried away by the story. But you should remember that in reading these you are to exercise the several powers of Abstraction in attending to the prominent truth or principle illustrated by the parable, to the neglect of the incidental circumstances, inserted for the purpose of making a consistent story, and classification in arranging these principles under their proper heads or classes, and generalization in drawing from them general truths which may be applicable to conduct.

Let me next speak of Biography. This is an important and a useful class of reading. But I have known Biography read unprofitably as well as profitably. In fact I believe men as often mistake the true point, in this kind of reading, as in almost any other, especially when they read for the sake of treasuring up examples for imitation. One, for example, will read the life of Howard. He will be able to tell all the particular facts, and to dwell upon all the particular circumstances, and that will be all. These facts will exist in his mind only as facts, not as manifestations of

principles, in the study of human nature.— Another will exercise the power of abstraction in attending to the principles, which are illustrated, to the neglect of a thousand incidental circumstances, he will follow these principles through all the various incidents of life, and, by so doing, will arrive at a general principle. For instance, we will first notice that Howard's attention was providentially directed to the condition of Prisoners, from the circumstance that, as a magistrate, he was called to visit prisoners. His own account of the matter is plain and simple. "The distress of prisoners," he says, "came more immediately under my notice, when I was sheriff of the county of Bedford, and the circumstance, which excited me to activity on their behalf, was seeing some, who by the verdict of the juries had been declared not guilty, and some, on whom the grand jury did not find such an appearance of guilt, as subjected them to trial, and some whose prosecutors did not appear against them, (all of whom ought to have been instantly discharged,) dragged back to jail, where they had been confined for months

and locked up again, until they should pay various fees to the jailor, clerk of assizes, &c. In order to redress this hardship, I applied to the justices of the county, for a salary to the jailor, instead of his fees. They were properly affected with this grievance, and willing to grant the relief required, but they wanted a precedent for charging the county with expense. I therefore rode into several neighboring counties in search of a precedent. But I soon learned that the same injustice was practiced in them, and looking into the prisons, I beheld scenes of calamity, which I grew daily more and more anxious to relieve." Here then, a philosophical reader will perceive that a heart naturally benevolent, and filled with a love of justice, is accidentally as it were excited. The individual Howard had no idea then of doing all that he afterwards undertook, in behalf of the prisoner, in devoting his life to the cause, but the circumstances, which first awakened his attention, were such as called upon him for effort, called upon him to visit neighboring counties. Here he gained more knowledge, and the very circumstance of his

making efforts increased his interest. Following him through his life the philosophical reader will draw the general conclusion, that attention to, and efforts and sacrifices in behalf of any person, or class of persons, of any object or class of objects, is naturally calculated to increase interest in these persons or objects and to call forth still further efforts and sacrifices. Thus he has derived, from reading the life of Howard, a general principle. This he will verify, by watching the conduct and reading the biographies of other men. And this principle he can apply to his own practice. He can go and put forth efforts and make sacrifices in behalf of any object, for which he thinks he does not feel sufficient interest. He can apply it to practice in his influence upon others by inducing them to do the same.

But how did he arrive at this general principle? It was by abstraction and generalization. I have dwelt upon this particular example in order to illustrate what I regard as the proper mode of reading biography. You are to read not for the sake of the facts, as

facts, but for the sake of the principles, of which these facts are the manifestations.

I have spoken of the imitation of example. Here the young mistake. I have known young men, desirous of being distinguished orators, imitate the attitudes, gestures and tone of voice, of the most distinguished speakers they had known, instead of endeavoring to gather up the important principles of oratory, manifested in their peculiarities and apply them to their own individual habits and capacities. But perhaps, out of regard to my profession, I may be permitted to illustrate my views by reference to the example of our Savior. This we are called upon to imitate, and yet none of us can expect to do the same deeds that he did. What then must we do? We must look at his actions, not as important in themselves, but as important because they are the manifestations of the principles of his character. We may imitate some particular actions, and fall far short of complying with the call which is made upon us. For instance, we may fast forty days, or we may pray all night. But

this is not imitating his example. It is copying some few of his actions. But copying actions is not imitating examples, although the former is so often mistaken for the latter. We must look, I say, at our Savior's actions in order to gather up a knowledge of his principles, and his spirit. We may learn that one of his principles, in the discharge of the duties of the Messiahship, was unswerving devotion to the will of God, another was that of self sacrificing devotion to the good of man, and not merely to his temporal good but to the improvement of his moral and spiritual character. Here then are principles.—These principles we may apply to the regulation of our own conduct, in our peculiar circumstances, and according to our powers. We may never work miracles to heal the sick, but we may under the influence of a self sacrificing devotion to their good, do all in our power to relieve their distresses. We may never be called to the death of the cross, but we may be called to unswerving devotion to duty, amid sneers and opposition. You perceive then how we may apply our

habits of abstraction and generalization in the reading of Biography. We are to withdraw our attention from unimportant and incidental circumstances, and to direct it to prominent principles, or rather we are to direct our attention to the peculiarities in the various facts, which tend to exemplify and illustrate important principles, and then by the power of generalization we are to draw out distinctly the general principles indicated, so that being distinctly before our own minds, we may apply them to practice.

The same principles which have been pointed out as applicable to the reading of Biography, are equally applicable to the reading of History. Much is said to young men upon the importance of reading History. And they are often misled by what is said to them. They seem to think that a knowledge of the facts of history is of great advantage in itself considered, that these facts are important simply because they are facts of history. I would agree with others, that the reading of history is important provided it be read aright. But I regard the facts of history as of no sort of im-

portance whatever in themselves considered, and merely because they are facts of history. And the fact that a young man has treasured these up in his memory, is in my estimation no more to his advantage than it would be to be able to remember the number of stores in a particular street;—that a certain battle was fought at a certain place on a certain day of the year, and that so many were killed and such an army came off victorious, all this is nothing to me simply as facts. But these are of vast importance to me as serving to illustrate human nature and mark its condition at a particular time, and the indications of its progress and advancement. It may be that this battle was the consummation of a struggle for liberty on the one hand and for power on the other, and that the result either promoted the former or established the latter. It may be of the utmost importance then, that I remember this battle in connection with the principles involved in the struggle, and the consequences which result from its issue. So it is of no particular importance to me that Cæsar or that Alexander, that Socrates or

Plato lived at certain periods and performed certain actions. These things are of no importance to me, simply as facts. But in studying the character of these individuals, the manner in which these characters were formed by the influences to which the individuals were subjected — the circumstances under which they were placed, and the influence which these characters exerted upon the community of their own times and the generations which followed, in studying these things, it may be a matter of great importance that I fix in my mind clear ideas and vivid recollections of these characters.

You perceive then how I would have you read History. You will look at the facts in history only in their bearing upon important results in the manifestation and development of human nature, and in their influence upon the improvement or depression of the race. So you will look at the characters which are brought forward in history in the same light. You will endeavor to understand the principles which are developed, the circumstances under which they were formed and the

influences which they exerted. History is often said to be Philosophy teaching by examples. If you read in the way which I have suggested, it may be so. You will be studying the Philosophy of human nature as that Philosophy is developed in the particular examples which are brought to view. So you may notice the influence which the peculiar characters of different nations exert in giving a peculiar national character to their laws and institutions and the influence which these laws and institutions exert upon the character of the people. In looking at particular historical characters you will often detect some one act which is not dwelt upon by the historian, but which lays open to your view at a single glance the governing principles of the character and puts you in possession of the means of forming a correct estimate of a great variety of apparently very different actions. There may be apparent inconsistency of conduct which will disappear as soon as you become acquainted with the ruling motives or governing principles of the men. I would recommend still further that you read with a pen-

cil in hand to mark the passages which may appear to you to be important in their bearing upon the particular objects for which you study history. Or with a manuscript by your side in which you may copy such passages or minute down such references to them as will aid you in your review of or reflections upon what you have read. But in reading in the way which I have suggested you will be exercising the power of abstraction in attending to some points in history to the neglect of others.

You will improve yourselves in this exercise of the power of abstraction by fixing, when you are reading history or biography, upon the ruling principle in each character and then tracing this principle through all the various peculiarities of the character. You may still further improve yourselves by examining any book you may read in regard to several different points one by one. You may look first at the style, study out its peculiarities, and class the style as it appears to you. This you may do without attending to other peculiarities of the book. And when you have done this you may take some other point, as for example, the

correctness or incorrectness of the opinions advanced, and their probable beneficial or injurious tendency in a practical point of view.— Still further, if you will direct your attention to the study of natural sciences or to that of the mathematical and exact sciences, you will gain great power in the exercise of abstraction—and in the application of this power to the purposes of classification or generalization.

In closing this letter I would offer a few words upon the general subject of reading. I have often been asked by my young friends to point out for them a course of reading. But as for myself I object to this.— For each individual in pointing out a course of reading will be influenced by his own peculiar tastes which may differ materially from the tastes of those for whom he is pointing out the course. His pursuits may be different and he may have read for very different purposes from what the young person whom he would advise, would read. Instead of pointing out a course of reading I would simply offer one or two suggestions as to the manner of reading. And my first suggestion is,

that you read by subjects rather than by authors. Suppose that you are reading in regard to our revolution. You will naturally wish to know the causes which led to this revolution, both as you find them in the previous characters and habits and feelings of the people of this country and in the peculiar courses pursued towards them by the parent country. You will then, while upon this subject, not read authors regularly through, but will seek in different authors and in different portions of the same author, for all the information you can gain upon this particular point. When you have done this I would advise that you sit down and write out a dissertation upon the revolution, its causes, the manifestation which it affords of the principles of human nature and the influence exerted by it upon the condition of the world, the condition of America, of England and of other European states. Or if you have not time to write all this out in full you can by reflection picture it all out to your mind's eye so as to have clear ideas and vivid conceptions in regard to it. And in this way the subject will be settled in your

own mind and you will have distinct ideas stored away for future use. So if you should become interested in the character and times of queen Elizabeth. Read all you can get upon that particular subject. And when you have read, either form to yourselves clear and distinct conceptions upon the subject, or if you have time write out an essay or a dissertation upon the subject. I repeat then, read by subjects. When you have fixed your thoughts upon a particular subject do not dismiss it from your minds until you obtain clear and correct ideas of that subject. Waste no time in determining when you shall begin to read, and what course of reading you shall pursue. But begin by reading upon the subject which is at the time most interesting to you, and pursue the course which may be dictated by the subject upon which you may be interested. Your interest upon one subject and your reading upon it may excite your interest in other, and kindred subjects. In this way, if you are careful to read not merely for amusement but with the desire of improvement, and if you will reflect or write upon the subjects upon

which you read you will be pursuing what will be most profitable to you because it will be most in accordance with your peculiar tastes and purposes of life.

LETTER IX.

INTELLECTUAL SELF-CULTIVATION.

Memory—The importance of the subject stated—Artificial systems of Mnemonics of no avail—The first step in improving the memory consists in securing clear and distinct ideas of the various subjects to which our attention may be directed—This may be done by making the particulars of our knowledge the subject of thought—The influence of one's habit of associating ideas upon the memory—general suggestions in regard to memory—Imagination, what it is, illustrated Its exercise must be based upon some previous knowledge of the subjects upon which it is exercised—Imagination possessed by all though in different degrees and manifested very early—Imagination of great importance, in the investigation and establishment of truth—in the various process of invention—Its influence upon character—Modes of cultivating and regulating the imagination.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

I have already spoken of the modes of acquiring knowledge. I have pointed out the

way, in which we should strive to acquire an accurate acquaintance with the objects around us, under the head of perception. I have pointed out the way, in which we should strive to form clear and distinct ideas, under the general head of Conception. I have pointed out the best way of classifying objects and deriving from a knowledge of their qualities general truths, under the general head of Abstraction. These topics seem to embrace all that need be said in this connection on the subject of acquiring knowledge. I come now to speak of the best modes of retaining knowledge, or in other words to speak upon the subject of Memory. This is as important, to say the least, if not as interesting as any topic that can come before us. Who is there of us that has not lamented at times and in relation to particular subjects the weakness and shortness of his own memory? Who of us does not wish, after laboring hard to acquire knowledge, to be able to retain it for future enjoyment and future use? The subject of memory then is important. I trust that its importance, at least will give it interest.

But I have felt, as I have been preparing to address you upon this subject, that all I might be able to offer would only disappoint your expectations. Because most seem to expect when you speak of directions to aid the memory, that you have some peculiar and perhaps patent mode of securing the recollection of objects to recommend. I remember that not many years since in Massachusetts there were several passing from town to town Lecturing upon and teaching Mnemonics. And all run after these Lectures under the idea that they should never more be troubled to remember whatever they might desire to retain. The course recommended in these lectures was to take familiar objects and arbitrarily connect them in our own minds with the particulars which we wished to remember. Or to have certain words or certain arbitrary combinations of letters, represent certain facts and dates. There have been a great variety of these artificial helps to the memory. But to my mind they appear to be only the sports and pastimes of ingenuity, of no sort of practical advantage whatever. In the first place

the same amount of labor which would fix in the mind these objects which represent others, would have answered in most cases to have fixed in the mind the objects themselves which are represented. In the second place, suppose that by this artificial mode you are completely successful in remembering facts. Still you remember them only as facts, without their connection with any important consequences. And, therefore, so far as your own future improvement is concerned you are but little better than you would be without the recollection of these facts. I have then no patent mode of improving the memory to recommend, no new or royal road to point out. I have no faith in such things myself and I cannot recommend them to others. Having thus guarded you against erroneous expectations in regard to my recommendation, I will proceed directly to the subject. And here without occupying any space in definitions of the term Memory, or in quoting from the books upon the subject, I will proceed at once to point out what my own observation and experience have taught me in regard to its improvement.

And first, I remark that you cannot retain that which you never acquired, and, that on this point, many mistakes are made. An individual examines a painting, he goes away, and shortly after, when asked to describe that painting he finds that he has forgotten all its peculiar features. Now where is the difficulty? He complains that his memory is weak and treacherous. But I contend that there is no proof of this. The fact is, he never had a clear and distinct conception of that painting, a vivid idea or representation of it in his own mind. And here is the point to which attention should be directed. For I have watched this point carefully, and I feel prepared to state as a general principle, that we must form clear conceptions or ideas of whatever we wish to retain, since it is only these perceptions or ideas that we can store away, or recall. I say then, if you examine a painting, and then dismiss the painting from your thoughts, you never will be able to retain an accurate idea of it.— But if after having examined a painting, you make it the subject of after thought, if when the painting is removed from your vision, you

dwell upon it, name over all the parts to yourself, and picture it all out to your mind's eye, so that you can see it in conception, as distinctly as ever you saw it in bodily vision,—if, I say, you will do this, you will be able to retain your conceptions, you will have an idea which you can store away for future use. So too in regard to other departments of knowledge. Here are two individuals listening to a sermon, or a lecture. They listen with equal attention. The one retains what he hears, while the other does not. And what is the cause of the difference? It is this. The one hears with attention, but dismisses the whole subject from his mind when he leaves the house. He does not make the discourse a subject of thought, after he has done hearing, he does not bring it up distinctly before his mind's eye, in all its heads, divisions, arguments, illustrations and conclusions, after he has done hearing, and left the house. The other does this. When he retires, he brings up the whole, as a matter of thought. In the one case it is associated only with the preacher and the circumstances under which he spoke, it is all without

the mind. In the other case it is transferred from this outward view to an inward grasp, if I may so speak. It exists, or the conceptions or ideas of the discourse exist, within the mind itself, as a part of its own store, and as one of the conditions or states in which it has existed. This view of the subject seems to me to contain the whole secret in regard to the influence of attention upon memory. Much is often said upon this subject of attention as connected with the improvement of the memory. And yet in all that has been said I have seen no directions, as to the precise point, to which the attention should be directed. You must pay attention, say writers upon the subject. But attention to what? The young man strives to pay close attention to the examination of a painting, or to the hearing of a discourse, and thinks that he has done all that is required, and yet he cannot remember. I say too, pay attention. But remember that all attention in examination and hearing, will be of no avail unless you also direct your attention to the forming distinct conceptions of what you see and hear, unless after you have

seen and heard, you make the subject of what you see and hear matters of distinct and separate thought. Unless you do this, all your attention will be nearly in vain. Although this point has not been distinctly dwelt upon, yet the general directions given by writers upon the subject have a bearing upon it. One says it will greatly aid your memory, to repeat what you have heard, and to describe what you have seen, to others. But why so? Because, I answer, in so doing, you are compelled to make them subjects of thought, you are compelled to have your ideas of them distinctly and clearly defined to your own minds. Another says, it will greatly aid your memory if you will write out carefully an account of what you have either seen or heard. And why so? Because you are thus compelled to make what you see and hear matters of thought, and to form clear and distinct conceptions of them. Now I would recommend all these various modes of improving the memory. But I would point out the reason why they may promote its improvement, that so, if you are unable to attend to these several modes, you may, at least

pause for a few moments, and make the various objects of your perceptions the subject of thought—form clear and distinct conceptions of them.

The substance then of my remarks is, first, to acquire thoroughly a knowledge of whatever may be the subject of attention. Here, I say, is the great mistake. Men complain that they cannot retain, when the fact is they never *possessed*; they complain that they cannot remember, when, in point of fact, they never knew. You, perceive, therefore, that all which I have hitherto advanced upon the modes of acquiring knowledge, has a direct bearing upon, an intimate connection with this subject, and might all be considered but as directions to help us improve the memory. How often have we heard the remark that such an one reads a great deal, but does not remember what he reads. But why? Does he read a novel? and does he talk about, or repeat the story to another, when he has done? If so, he may remember the story, for that will be the object of his conceptions. But if he simply read the story and then pass on to another, he will

not remember even that, because, by not dwelling upon it, in thought, he has formed no clear conceptions even of the story. Another, perhaps, may read the same story and make the sentiment, and the moral instructions conveyed, the subject of thought; of these he may give an account; on these he may dwell, as matters of thought, and these he may be able to remember longer even than the mere details of the story.

I would next remark that the character of one's memory depends much upon the peculiar manner in which he may associate ideas, and that men usually associate ideas according to their prevailing tastes, their previous habits or their engrossing turn of thought. This it is important to notice. We find men, often, pronouncing very different, perhaps directly opposite opinions, in regard to the same person, or book, or discourse. And why? Because the peculiarities, which are in accordance with or contrary to their previous habits of feeling, their previous opinions and prejudices, attract or repel, excite pleasure or disgust, and all else is overlooked. These peculiarities they will

remember, and they will remember the person, book or discourse, as marked by their peculiarities. Let an individual deliver a public address, or converse for a length of time upon a variety of topics, in the presence of a number, who are of different ways of thinking on a great variety of points. They may all remember the man and the address—but they will remember them by different circumstances. Suppose that he speak among other things of the subject of temperance, and shew himself by what he says to be a decided friend to the cause. The friends of temperance, who may be present, will always remember the man and the discourse; but it will be as a temperance man that they remember, and think, and speak of him. Suppose he shew himself an abolitionist. The abolitionists who may be present will fasten upon this feature in his character and his discourse, and will ever after remember him, and speak of him, as an abolitionist. They will at the time perhaps wholly overlook and disregard what he may say upon the subject of temperance; or if they do not overlook it at the time,

they will so dwell in thought upon his abolitionism, that they will forget altogether the other point in his character. Should these two classes of hearers, at some distance of time afterwards, converse together in regard to the man and the discourse, they will be surprised to find their recollections of him so entirely different. But the reason is that their memory has in both cases depended very much upon their habits of associating ideas, and these habits have resulted from the peculiar state of their feelings. It is common, therefore, and it is as useful as it is common, to associate ideas according to the relations which, to our minds, they may obviously bear to each other—determined as these relations will be by our pursuits, by our general train of thought, and by the bearing which they will probably have upon the use to which we may put them in our ordinary occupations. But the point of practical difficulty is to form such mental habits as will enable us to classify the various thoughts presented to the mind, in whatever manner they may be arranged when presented, in such a manner as will best

promote the object for which we would retain them. Without forming this habit we can never read, study or observe to advantage. If we look out upon the world around, a great variety of ideas are called up, or excited in our minds, by the different objects presented. But they are presented in no strict order.— They are arranged according to their relations in actual being, and not according to any relations of our thoughts with each other.— And this is well; for men are engaged in different pursuits, have different tastes, tendencies and habits—and consequently these are as well fitted for the use of one, as for that of another. But, unless we have formed such habits of association as will enable us to arrange these ideas in such a manner as is best calculated to promote our improvement, they will be of no great advantage to us.

It is the same with reading. Every writer arranges what he writes according to his own habits of thought, feeling and action. But your author's habits may be very different, in this respect, from your own. Therefore, to read profitably, you must not only follow the

author's train of reasoning or argument, but you must think over the subject, and rearrange and reconstruct these arguments according to your own habits of thought and modes of reasoning. You may differ from him in opinion; but, if so, you will be able to recollect wherein you differ.

I have thus touched upon the connection of association with memory. And the simple practical hint which I would give upon the subject is this:—Do not seek an artificial, although it may be regarded as a more philosophical, mode of associating ideas in order to promote strength of memory,—but follow the leading of your own feelings, influenced as they will be by your pursuits. Suppose, for example, that two men sit down to study history—the one a clergyman, the other a statesman. What object must each of these have in view as they read? Must not the clergyman wish to look at men in their relation to the subject of religion? And must not the statesman wish to look at men in their relation to state policy? These two then ought to read for different purposes; their different

pursuits require this of them. Neither, if possessed of a philosophic mind, will entirely overlook the object of the other, but the prominent objects of the two will be different. And reading for these different objects, they will remember very different points in history; each remembering those most distinctly which have a prominent bearing upon his particular pursuit. They will classify the facts of history very differently—each arranging them according to the quality or on the principle suggested by the use he is to make of them. And so too they will draw from these different facts very different general conclusions or principles—each drawing such conclusions as are suggested by the view which he takes of the facts, and the object for which he is examining them.

Follow then, I repeat, the leading of your own feelings—influenced as these will probably be by the object for which you are reading—and you will find your ideas and your items of knowledge arranging themselves in your mind, in what will be to you the most philosophical manner—the manner best adapt-

ed to the habits of your mind and to the use which you are to make of your knowledge.

Thus much have I thought it necessary to say in aid of your efforts to improve your memory; I will now pass to a few remarks upon the subject Imagination.

But what are we to understand by the term imagination? I answer, that we denote, by this term, that power which the mind possesses, of picturing to itself objects and scenes, plans and models, which have never been witnessed. For example: Miss Sedgewick, in her little work entitled "Live and Let Live," begins her story by taking you into the dwelling of Poverty and Intemperance. She there points out to you the father, brought to the bed of sickness by his intemperance; the mother, surrounded by a group of children, and nerving herself, in the strength of religious principle, for the double effort of sending forth her daughter to seek a place at domestic service, and of reconciling the pride of her husband to what he regarded as the degradation of the measure. Here is the description of a scene which her imagination

had pictured forth to her own mind. She only describes what, with her mind's eye, she saw; and yet she has described what probably never in fact existed, in all its details, and in the precise shape in which it is pictured forth. She has exercised that power of the mind, which we call imagination, in creations of its own. Imagination, then, is the power of picturing to the mind's eye scenes which never really existed.

But the imagination cannot create, without materials out of which to construct her various creations. To recur to the example I have given. Miss Sedgwick had undoubtedly visited the abodes of poverty and intemperance; she had listened to the objections to an imaginary degradation, urged by the pride of those who, by their own guilty courses, have reduced themselves to real degradation; she had, probably, been acquainted with families, where the mother had struggled against the trials to which she was subjected, sustained only by the strength of religious principle.— That is, she had some knowledge of those things concerning which she undertook to

write. Had there never been such a thing as intemperance in the world, or had Miss Sedgwick never seen or heard of poverty and intemperance, she never could have described such a picture. She probably, too, had looked into the human heart with a penetrating glance, and knew what course of conduct she might expect, as the result of certain opinions, principles or circumstances. On the basis of this knowledge she pictured forth a new scene. The details may all be exact descriptions of scenes with which she had actually been acquainted; only they are brought by the power of imagination into new relations and combinations with each other, so as to present an entirely new picture. Or, it may be, that no one of the details is a correct description of what she had seen; they may be only imitations, something which resembles or is like what she had seen.

Here, then, you learn two important truths. The first is, that there must be some knowledge as the basis on which the imagination must build, and as the material out of which it is to construct its creations. Then you

learn, in the second place, that the imagination is exercised in two different operations—either in separating the items of knowledge from the connections in which they are presented to the mind, and forming them into new combinations and new pictures, or in picturing new scenes related to what has actually been seen, either by way of contrast or resemblance.

Let me give another and somewhat more familiar illustration.—You are about to erect a new dwelling house, and you cast about, in your mind, in order to form some plan in accordance with which it shall be constructed. You recall to your mind the peculiarities of other houses with which you have been acquainted. In one, you have been pleased with the parlor, but have disliked the kitchen; in another it has been the reverse—you have liked the kitchen and disliked the parlor. In one, you have been pleased with the mode of heating—in another, with the mode of lighting. In this way, you have found various things which you admire, and various things to which you object, in the different houses with which you have been acquainted. You

now sit down and endeavor to unite these various excellences, to the exclusion of the various particulars, which you dislike, into one perfect whole. You thus prepare a plan.—Some peculiarities you have copied from one house, and some from another. In some particulars, you have not copied exactly, but have sought only a slight resemblance. In other cases your plan presents no resemblance to any thing you have seen. But only such remedies to inconveniences as have been suggested by the endurance of those inconveniences.

In all this, you have been exercising the power of imagination. You have been picturing to the mind's eye, all the various parts and peculiarities of your proposed house. You have now a clear view of it, and you could without difficulty describe the whole. But here as before you perceive that the new creations of your imagination are based upon and constructed out of your actual knowledge.

But we can go further than this in the exercise of the imagination. A writer of lively imagination, can sit in his room in New England and pen an eastern tale, giving an ac-

count of the manners and customs, modes of speech and thought, which prevail in parts of the world where he has never been, and among people whom he has never seen. But how can he do this? He must have acquired, in some way, some knowledge of eastern countries and of eastern manners and customs, modes of thought and forms of speech. Had there been no eastern nations, or had the writer never read or heard about them, he could not have written the story he has written. So a writer, of lively imagination, may write a tale, which shall bring up before you the Jews in the time of our Saviour, and exhibit all the peculiarities of their modes of belief, of their prejudices and expectations, their manners and customs, their modes of thought and of speech. But then he must previously have made himself acquainted, in some way, with the Jewish history and the Hebrew character. Had the character of the Hebrew nation been different, his story must have been different.— But how could it be made different, unless based upon a knowle'ge of this difference in their character?

One obvious fact, in regard to the imagination, is that, though possessed in different degrees, it is yet possessed by all, and manifested at a very early period of life. I have seen children, too young to articulate words, yet assuming imaginary characters, and endeavoring to act in accordance with what they imagined would become the assumed character.— And a few months later in life, I have seen them acting out, to the full, all the ceremonies and business of those older than themselves, making calls, asking questions, and passing compliments. I am aware it may be said, that this is a mere imitation. I answer, that it is true they have seen something of the kind, or they would never make the attempt. But what they do is not the same with what they have seen. It is only like that, and this I have said, is a legitimate exercise of the imagination, to picture new scenes, like what have fallen under our observation. Children then, very early manifest the power of imagination, in their plays. If encouraged they will also manifest at a very early age, the same power in the invention and relation of fictitious

stories. This exercise of the imagination in children is of a very doubtful tendency. And it is problematical whether it should be encouraged or checked.

I believe that, upon the subject of imagination, there is one great mistake, which is often made. Men read fictitious stories, and they soon seem to regard efforts at fictitious narrative, or, at least, efforts for mere amusement, as the only productions of the imagination. They therefore think that it may be well enough in its place to amuse a passing hour, but they have no idea that it is a power, whose exercise can be rendered useful. And yet, perhaps, no power of the mind is more employed in useful operations. Even in what is regarded as the peculiarly strict and logical process of abstract reasoning, imagination finds a place. You state for example an abstract truth. How, I ask, did you obtain a knowledge of that truth? Was it not by being acquainted with particulars involving that general truth? That I may illustrate more clearly, I would take one of the rules in Arithmetic, the rule of proportion for example. In that

rule is stated an abstract principle, a general truth or fact, in regard to numbers. But how, I ask, did the mind first arrive at that truth? Was it not by a careful acquaintance with particular cases, which involved that principle? And how, I ask, can you prove to me that that principle is correct? Must it not be by bringing before me some particular examples, which, by being worked out, shew that, in regard to them, the principle holds good? You cannot then arrive at general truths yourself, you cannot communicate general truths to others, without verifying those truths by particular examples. But when you are stating general truths so others, you may not always have at hand a supply of facts, which have actually occurred. Still, if you have a lively imagination you can suppose cases, and picture scenes which will not only illustrate, but verify the general truth you are inculcating. Still further, suppose you undertake to reason upon your general truths in an abstract manner, your course cannot be satisfactory. You must verify every step in your process, as you go along, by particular examples, and these particular

examples must be the creations of the imagination. Take our Saviour's parables, for instance; what are they? I answer, they are supposed cases, intended to picture forth and illustrate general truths. The parable of the talents, does not pretend to describe facts which actually occurred, it aims only to picture forth what may illustrate a general principle. But suppose that he had simply stated the general principle, that men's obligations correspond with their several abilities. How weak and powerless would this simple statement have been, compared with the impression made by the lively picture, presented in the parable. The same may be said of the parable of the ten virgins. It is a supposed case, a creation of the imagination, to illustrate a general and an important truth. These supposed cases, brought forward by the imagination, serve to verify general truths, to illustrate and make them familiar. And they throw an interest about these truths which would not otherwise attend them. You perceive this in different speakers and writers. One will write in a close and connected train of reasoning,

proposition will follow proposition, and all in a very logical manner. But still the process will be dull and dry. You cannot read with interest, and you find it difficult to retain what you read. Another will go over the same ground, but he will illustrate each general principle by some apt and striking supposed case. The whole will interest you as you read, and you will be able to retain the principles, because you will be able to retain the examples, which illustrate those principles. You perceive, therefore, that the imagination is not merely a power exerted to amuse. It is of great use, of great aid and assistance in all processes of reasoning, in enabling us to arrive at, to verify, to illustrate, and to set forth abstract truth.

Again, in the process of invention in the arts, the imagination is employed. Yet, here as before, its operations are based upon some previous knowledge. An individual, for example, understands something of the principles of Mechanical Philosophy. Taking this knowledge as the material to work upon, he imagines new combinations of these various principles, and, in this way, constructs in his

own mind a new machine. The machine is, to a degree, clearly and distinctly defined in his mind. But, it may be, that as he engages in its construction, he will find that there are obstructions which he has not thought of.— These he remedies. In all this process of invention, he has been engaged in a legitimate exercise of the imagination, he has been picturing forth to his own mind, constructions which never existed in fact. But his creations have been wrought out of previous knowledge. He has taken the principles of mechanical philosophy, with which he had become acquainted, and worked them up into new combinations, and thus brought forth new inventions. I have now explained what I understand by the term imagination, shown that its exercise must be based upon some previous knowledge of the subject, upon which it is exercised, shown that it is manifested by children in very early life, and that it is employed in process of reasoning, investigating or illustrating new truths, and also in the various process of invention in the arts.

I wish now to speak of its influence upon char-

acter. The imagination exerts a powerful influence upon character, in several important ways. Look at that youth, his character is now in the process of formation. What it will ultimately be, will depend upon what he aims to be, upon the standard which he tries to reach. One, who fixes that standard high, although he may never reach the standard at which he aims, will rise higher than he would have done, had it not been for that high standard. But what is this fixing on standard? Is it not picturing forth to the mind's eye the future character, in all its fulness and completeness. Is he looking forward to the law, he imagines himself already at the bar, and always in the first rank. Does he look forward to the pulpit? He is in imagination already there, the instrument in God's hands of converting thousands to the Gospel of his grace. I am aware these reveries of the imagination may be, and sometimes are indulged in to excess. But, I fully believe that, when under proper regulation, they may be, and often are, the means of stirring up the youthful energies to greater exertions than would otherwise have

been made. Of one thing, we may be certain that he who does not look forward to eminence in future life, will be sure not to reach it. He may fail, if he try, for there may be more vividness of imagination, than general strength of mind. But if he never makes the attempt, never pictures any success, he certainly will not secure it. And the more clear and distinct may be the picture, which is painted to the mind's eye, the more will the individual be excited to efforts. The truth of these remarks may be seen, perhaps, as fully illustrated in the pursuit of wealth, as any where else. There are some who when young, picture out to their mind's eye the pleasures of rolling in wealth. They imagine the time, when they shall be worth an independent fortune. They imagine what they shall then do, how much enjoyment they shall secure, or how much good they will accomplish. And the dwelling upon these imaginary pictures often has a salutary effect in promoting industry and economy. So too, in the religious life, every one aims at some standard. That standard may be high or low, it may be formed as

it should be, upon the basis of our Lord's character, or upon the basis of some christian character, which we have known, or it may be the creation of our own imagination, upon the basis of our understanding of the requirements of the Gospel. Still, there is before the mind's eye the standard, and the cast and perfection of character will depend upon the character of that standard, upon its degree of elevation and upon the correctness of its outlines. And this picturing the future standard of character, is a legitimate exercise of the imagination.— You perceive then, how the imagination exerts an influence upon the character, in its influence upon the standard of character, which men strive to reach. He whose imagination is lively, who can form clear and distinct pictures of the future, will be more excited to effort, than he whose imagination is deadened and confused. So too, he whose imaginary pictures are based upon the most full and correct knowledge, will find from this exercise, the most salutary influence. He who knows something of the struggle necessary to secure eminence, either in wealth or knowledge, will

find himself prompted to struggle as well as enjoy, he will look forward to severe labors and hard trials, as well as to glorious triumphs.

Again, the imagination may exert an influence in promoting steadiness and firmness of character. I am aware, indeed, that the very opposite of this is sometimes the result of an excessively indulged imagination. A person sometimes seems to live almost wholly, in an ideal world, of his own creation, surrounded, it may be, overpowered by fears resting upon imaginary dangers. But still, I say, that when rightly cultivated, it may promote steadiness of character. On what does steadiness of character depend? Does it not depend on looking at things just as they are. But in looking at things just as they are, one part of the exercise consists in perceiving clearly their consequences, in picturing out distinctly and vividly to the mind's eye these consequences, as they must, or as they probably will follow.— Here for example, you are overtaken by a calamity. Now, what I mean by steadiness of character is, the being able to meet the calamity in its true character, just as it is. —

Stupid insensibility to its consequences is not a part of true steadiness of character; nor yet can he maintain steadiness of character, who is filled and perhaps overwhelmed by imaginary fears. It is he who can look at the calamity just as it is, and trace its probable consequences and picture them forth in their true light. But here must be the exercise of the imagination. The exercise is to picture forth as probable, what never really existed in fact. And this is an exercise of imagination. It should be the exercise of a well regulated imagination, an imagination under the guidance of some knowledge upon the subject. Suppose you have broken a limb, from ignorance of the consequence of such a fracture, you may be stupidly insensible to your danger; or you may be overwhelmed by groundless and unnecessary fears. But, if you have some slight knowledge of the usual consequences of such a fracture, you may by means of this knowledge, and in the exercise of a well regulated imagination, picture to yourself the probable consequences of such a fracture, so accurately as to be able to conduct appropriately

under the circumstances of the case. So in any case of disease, trouble or affliction, the exercise of a well regulated imagination, will serve to promote steadiness of character. And this steadiness of character is of great importance, in extricating one's self from difficulty. We may picture to ourselves the consequences of different courses of conduct, and then compare the one with the other. In this way we may plan and contrive our escape from difficulties.

Once more: the imagination exerts a powerful influence upon the character, in regard to politeness. What is true politeness? It is in principle, a kind regard for the feelings of others, and a careful endeavor to promote their happiness. Now there is a vast difference between one of a lively, and one of a dull imagination, in this respect. The one can enter into your feelings at once, and can sympathize most truly with you. You have lost a friend, you are in great grief, your heart is overwhelmed with sorrow, you shrink from the approach and especially from the language of even your most intimate friend. A friend, who by the

exercise of the imagination can enter into all your feelings, will not intrude any remarks, any general and common place observations. He will exercise his kindness and his sympathy, by sitting in silence by your side. Another, with equal warmth of affection, would wound your already afflicted heart, by his officious kindness. And where is the difference. The one, from being possessed of a more lively, or a more delicate imagination, can enter more truly and fully into your feelings.—The christian rule of politeness is, to treat others, as you would wish to be treated by them, or to do as you would wish to be done by. This is usually called the golden rule of christian justice. I call it the golden rule of christian politeness. And this rule not only sanctions the use of the imagination, but compels us to use it. Here is a stranger takes up his residence by your side. This rule requires that you should treat this stranger as you would wish to be treated, in similar circumstances. But how can you determine this. You must, in imagination, place yourself in similar circumstances, among strangers, consider what would

be your feelings, what would be your wishes, and then you are prepared to enter into, and sympathise with, and treat kindly and properly the stranger by your side. So too, here is your neighbor in affliction; you are required to do as, under similar circumstances, you would be done by. How can you do this?— You can place yourself in imagination, in scenes of affliction and ask how you would wish to be treated. Then you will be qualified to act in accordance with gospel principles, to sympathize with the feelings of all around you, and to do by them as you would be done by.

I have thus pointed out some of the ways, in which the imagination exerts an influence upon the character. I might have pointed out more fully than I have done, its evil influences, but I have not room to describe them in full. A well cultivated, and well regulated imagination is of the utmost importance to the character, in a great variety of particulars.— On the other hand, a diseased, perverted or ill regulated imagination is destructive of all correctness and propriety of character.

It now remains only, that I offer a few hints

to aid you in your efforts to cultivate and regulate the imagination. And here I would say first:—You must remember that the creations of the imagination are based on previously acquired knowledge. The more distinct, accurate and perfect your knowledge, so far as it goes, may be, the more accurate will be the creations of the imagination. For example, it is often said, by writers of all denominations, that, in order to enter into, and feel the full force of the instructions of the gospel, we must throw ourselves into the times and the feelings of the Jews and of those around Jesus. But how is this to be done? The more accurate be our knowledge of Jewish history, and of the Hebrew peculiarities of character, the more we understand of Jewish prejudices and expectations, the better shall we be able to throw ourselves back into those times and feelings, the better shall we be able to enter into, and understand the instructions of the gospel. The first step then, in cultivating the imagination, is to be accurate in our knowledge, which is to serve as the basis, on which the creations of the imagination are to rest.

My second direction is, that in reading all argumentative works, you exercise your imagination, in bringing up to your mind's eye, particular cases and instances, to verify the steps and conclusions of the argument. And so in reading a work upon abstract truth, verify the conclusions and principles, by applying them in practice to particular supposed cases. Are you reading an abstract statement of the nature of faith? Prove these statements, by applying them to some supposed cases. So too, in reading descriptive scenes, fill out the description by the exercise of the imagination. In reading historical works, pause and exercise the imagination, in picturing to the mind's eye the peculiarities of manners and customs of different periods and ages. In this way, whatever may be the character of your reading, you may be exercising your imagination in a healthful and proper manner.

My third direction is, that in reading fictitious writings, you exercise your own judgment and reason. Your imagination is naturally exercised in the reading itself; if you give loose reins to it, there is danger that your

imagination will be indulged to excess, and will gain the mastery over your other powers. Exercise your reason then, and your judgment. Seek for principles, ask if these principles be sound and healthful. In this way, while you are exercising your imagination, you will, by this exercise of the reason and the judgment, keep it under restraint and regulation.

Still further: in regard to the various strange phenomena, which are sometimes mentioned, such as Animal Magnetism or any thing of that character, cherish the thought that you are in danger of being led away as the dupes of a disordered imagination, and that you are in danger of being misled by your fear of being duped. Hold yourself then carefully on your guard. Exercise the imagination. But exercise also the judgment and the reason, call up past experience, and observation. Be slow to believe, but at the same time hold yourself open to conviction when it can be based upon good and substantial evidence.

I have thus spoken of the imagination. I would hope that my suggestions may aid you

in your progress of self-cultivation, and be instrumental in securing completeness and perfection of character.

LETTER X.

INTELLECTUAL SELF-CULTIVATION.

Reasoning, argument, evidence—Introductory remarks on the importance and difficulty of the subject—The first object to be sought in all investigations is truth—The question whether men are responsible for their opinions, considered—Primitive truths—One is that every effect must have some adequate cause—This an instinctive principle—Another is that the evidence of the senses may be depended upon—Different instinctive principles stated—A test by which they may be known pointed out in a quotation—Different kinds of evidence considered—Mathematical, Probable, Historical—The causes of difference of opinion—Men's wishes, men's pride of character, words are used in different senses—Men's passions and emotions have an influence upon their opinions.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

The subject of the present letter, reasoning, argument, evidence, is one which I tremble to approach. It is a subject so vast in its extent, and so important in its various relations

and bearings, that I fear I shall not be able to do it any thing like justice, within the compass of a single letter. It is indeed a subject which would admit of, and which even demands, for a full discussion of all its various points, a whole volume. All that I can hope to do, is to throw out suggestions and awaken enquiry, in regard to some points of more immediate practical importance. It is however, a consolation here, as it has been during the whole course of these letters, that I am addressing thinking beings, in view of their own self-education, and that self-education is the result of the mental action excited, rather than of the knowledge actually imparted.

I. The first position which I would establish is, that in all questions of debate, in the ordinary duties of life, and in the various subjects, which may be presented in your reading, you should seek only the truth. Make this the primary point of all your investigations, and free your minds, as far as possible, from every influence which can, in any way, interfere with your arriving at the truth.

This state of mind will exert a powerful influence upon your process of investigation. And why so? I answer, that, in all your investigations, you will estimate evidence according to its bearing upon the particular object you wish by that investigation to accomplish. If you enter upon the examination of a subject, with a single desire to arrive at the truth in regard to it, then the questions you will ask in regard to any particular item of evidence, will be what is its true character, what is its intrinsic weight in the scale, and upon which side of the question it is to be ranked. But if you examine the same subject, with the desire to find certain opinions true, the question you will ask in regard to any item of evidence, will be, does it, or does it not support that position? The same items of evidence then, you perceive, may appear to the mind to have very different bearings and to be of very different degrees of weight, according to the state of mind in which it is examined. Let then the love of truth be the prevailing influence in all your investigations. But in regard to many ques-

tions it will be asked, what is meant by truth. I will illustrate. An individual asserts that a certain doctrine of religion is true. You are awakened to investigation, to enquire if it be true. What in this case is the object of your investigation? It is simply to ascertain a fact, and that is, whether the propositions in which this doctrine is expressed, do express the instructions of scripture upon the point. This is the single and simple point of enquiry. If you find that they do so express the instructions of scripture, then you have found it to be true. If you have found that they do not so express them you have found that they are not true. This is one case, take another. One asserts that the Sub Treasury system, so called, is well calculated to promote the best interests of the country. You examine, with a sincere desire to form a right judgment. But what do you seek here? It is not a matter of fact, which you wish to verify, for the scheme has never been tried. What is it then? You are seeking to form a right, a correct opinion, as to the probable operation of the scheme. This cannot in strict-

ness of language, be said to be seeking the truth. But yet the state of mind is the same in the one case, as in the other; in the one case you seek to divest yourself of all sectarian prejudices, and even of all sectarian wishes, of all strong desires to find one side of the question or the other true. You endeavor to investigate impartially, and to give every circumstance, and every item of evidence, its just and proper place and weight. So, in the other case, you endeavor to divest yourself of all party prejudice, and even of all party wishes. You endeavor to investigate impartially, to give every circumstance and every item of evidence its proper place and just weight. The state of mind, and the modes of investigation are the same in both cases, and therefore we call the latter, as well as the former, a love of the truth. Yet it is, strictly speaking, only a desire to form a correct judgment, as to a future probability. And, in all cases of investigation and ordinary conduct, this state of mind is important, although it might, in some cases, be very properly called by another name, if

we were looking at the result, at the object sought, rather than at the state of mind in which the investigation is pursued. I repeat then my position, let the prevailing influence in all your investigations be a love of truth. But here, perhaps, an important question will occur to your minds. It is this: Are men responsible for their opinions? This is a question which has occasioned much discussion. And yet, upon examining the question, I have been surprised to find that the arguments and admissions of the advocates of one side of the question, when compared with those of the other, shew that both parties are really of the same opinion. The fact is, that the question admits of two directly opposite answers. In the first place, strictly speaking, and regarded merely as an abstract question, the answer must be that men are not responsible for their opinions. The decisions of the judgment must follow the preponderance of evidence. This is an abstract and incontrovertible truth. If two and two appear to the mind to make four, the mind must assent to it; it cannot be otherwise.

There is no liberty to do as one would wish, and, consequently, there is no responsibility. For the correctness of this position the advocates of one side of the question contend strenuously, and the correctness of this position the advocates of the other side of the question readily admit. Here then the abstract question is at once settled, that the judgment must follow the preponderance of evidence, as that evidence is presented to the mind; and that, consequently, belief is not voluntary, and there can be no responsibility in regard to it. But the question presents another aspect, and that is, its practical aspect. The advocates of the affirmative of the question will say, if you allow yourself to be influenced, in your examination of evidence, by prejudice, by strong desires to find one side of the question true and the other false, if you are not thoroughly faithful and impartial in the examinations; if in these, or in any similar ways, you allow your judgment to be warped, then verily, you are guilty; and, if you carefully guard against all these sources of error, then are you praiseworthy, and

therefore, in regard to all these points, you are responsible. And there are so many sources of error, of this kind, that practically, it amounts to the same as a full responsibility—in regard to our opinions—that in actual life, we are and ought always to feel ourselves responsible. For, although, abstractly speaking, the judgment must follow the preponderance of evidence, and is not therefore responsible, yet, practically speaking, we cannot be certain that this preponderance does not result from our prejudices, or from the slight and partial manner in which we have examined, and therefore we ought ever to cherish a feeling of responsibility. Such is the argument of the advocates of the negative of the question, and such their conclusion. And this conclusion, their opponents most fully and readily admit. Consequently you will find that all are, in reality, and in substance, agreed, that the question admits of two answers; that in the abstract it is true, that men are not responsible for their opinions; but, that in practice there is a responsibility in regard to the state of mind in which an ex-

amination is conducted and the manner in which it is pursued, which is sufficient to cover the whole ground, and impose the necessity of cherishing a feeling of responsibility.

In the investigation of truth there are several things to be considered. And first, there are certain primitive truths, as they are sometimes called, or as I should call them, innate principles of belief. They are inherent laws, established in the very constitution of our minds, and, in accordance with which, our minds operate in regard to belief. One of these innate principles or laws I have before alluded to, and that is, an instinctive belief, that every effect must have a cause, and a cause adequate to the effect. This I say, is an inherent instinctive principle of our nature. No human being, with the usual endowments of a human being, is found without it. The infant, in his earliest notices of things around him, manifests the influence of this principle. No argument, no process of reasoning can make this belief stronger, no illustration can make it clearer. The simple annunciation of

the principle appeals to every man's own consciousness. And that is the end of the matter. Now suppose a position is laid down which contradicts this principle. What are we to do? We cannot refute such a position by general argument. We have only to appeal to men's consciousness. The Atheistic infidel, for example, says that the man is a fool, who believes in the existence of a God. You have never seen him, you cannot feel him, he is not in any way subjected to the cognizance of your senses, you cannot prove his existence, and therefore you are a fool to believe in such a being. Such is the position, and such the argument. How do you meet that argument? Do you go on in argument to prove from the works of nature that there must have been design in contriving these? that there must have been a designer and contriver. If you stop here you accomplish nothing, because he does not admit your evidence as bearing upon the point, he may say all this is true, I admit the whole, but still I add, I have never seen your God and therefore I cannot believe in his exist-

ence. And what will you say now? You have only to appeal to himself, to his observation of human nature, to his own consciousness, to his actual practice. For example, suppose your opponent be a father, appeal to his observation, tell him to take his child to one of our manufacturing establishments, to watch his astonishment, and when that child eagerly asks him, "Father, who made all this?" let the father calmly tell him that we have no reason to believe that any one contrived and made the whole. And when he meets with incredulity on the part of the child, let him admit that thought, so withering to a parent's heart, that the child of his affection *is a fool*. In children you see this principle more strikingly manifested than in others. You all remember the story of George Washington, and his father, and his little garden with the letters George in one of his beds. And you remember his incredulity. In this way you may appeal to his observation, to prove that men are so constituted, that they *must* believe that every event has a cause adequate to the effect.

You may appeal to his own consciousness

in regard to other things at least, if not in regard to this very point. For myself, I do not believe there ever was an atheist in feeling and in reality. Men have, I know, argued against the existence of the Deity; but I do not believe that any one could so entirely divest himself of this instinctive principle of belief, as to be free from any feeling, or fear, or suspicion, that after all, this fair universe must have had a creator.

You may appeal to his own every day conduct. He believes that the wife of his bosom, the children of his affection, the friends of his attachment, do love him. But why does he believe this? Has he ever seen their love? Can he tell what it is, and what it looks like? No. Why then does he believe? Their conduct towards him—in its kindness, in its devotion—is regarded as an effect. And, under the instinctive feeling of our natures, he believes that this effect must have had a cause, and that it must have been a cause adequate to the effect. Hatred, indifference—these are not causes adequate to the effect; there must have been love as the only cause

adequate to the effect. Thus you perceive that a proposition which contradicts this innate principle of our natures, is to be met only by an appeal to this principle, as universal and not to be gainsaid.

I have dwelt upon this point for two reasons. In the first place, it illustrates the nature of innate principles of belief, and, in the second because, I have known of young men, who have been religiously educated, yielding to atheistical sophistry. Their remarks have been—"we were taught to believe in a God, but that is a mere prejudice of childhood.—You cannot prove to us that there is a God, and therefore we cannot believe in his existence." The question has been asked, how shall we guard our young men against such dangers? Shall not increased efforts be made in their religious training? I say yes—but I say also let increased efforts be made in regard to their intellectual education. Let them understand the principles of belief, the nature of evidence, and the proper modes of reasoning, and then will they be guarded, in some measure, against the power of such mere sophistry.

I will, for the further illustration of this part of my subject, dwell a little upon another innate principle of belief. It is this—that the evidence of our senses is worthy of confidence, in regard to the existence of external objects in ordinary circumstances. For example—I see ladies and gentlemen, in an assembly—or, at least, I think I do. It is an innate principle that I should believe, therefore, that ladies and gentlemen are in that assembly.

This, you will perhaps say, is so evident that it cannot be denied. And yet there have been philosophers, who have undertaken to prove that all this is a deception, that our senses are not to be depended upon, that there are no such things as external objects, that we have in our minds ideas of men, trees, beasts, houses, and indeed of all external objects, but that there are no such things in existence as these objects. Such is the position;—it is supported by very strong arguments. And how are we going to refute this position? It can be done only by an appeal to this innate principle of belief, of which I am speaking,

that the testimony of our senses is worthy of confidence.

You cannot refute the position by argument. You may say to the atheist, you cannot prove by argument that a man stands before you. Just try it.—Suppose there were a blind man with you: how could you prove to him that a man is standing before you? You could not prove it by argument; all you could do would be to lead him up to the man, and let him ascertain by the sense of feeling.—But if the senses are not to be depended upon, this is no proof. Thus you perceive that here, as before, your only way to meet and refute a position, which contradicts this innate principle of belief, is to make a direct appeal to it as an innate and universal principle.

I have said enough, I would hope, to illustrate the nature and use of these innate principles of belief. Before leaving this part of my subject, however, I will enumerate some of these principles, and offer a quotation in point in regard to the qualities by which they may be known. The principles which are most generally admitted are these:

1. A belief in our own existence.

2. A confidence in the evidence of our senses.

3. A confidence in our own mental processes—that facts, events, for instance, suggested to us by our memory, really occurred.

4. A belief in our personal identity.

5. A conviction that every effect must have a cause, and a cause adequate to the effect.

6. A confidence in the uniformity of nature.

Such are the innate principles of belief which are most generally admitted.

“Various characters have been proposed by which these innate principles may be known. One of those given by Father Buffier appears to be the best, and to be alone sufficient to identify them. It is this—that their practical influence extends even to those persons who affect to dispute their authority; in other words that in all the affairs of life, the most sceptical philosopher acts as much as the mass of mankind upon the absolute belief of these truths. Let a large rock be rolling down a declivity and coming with great velocity, to

all appearance, directly upon such a sceptical philosopher, and he will forget his theory that this is no rock but only an idea; he will try to avoid the danger just as much as any other man. Let him be taking cognizance of an offence committed against him ten years ago, and he never doubts that he is still the person against whom the offence was committed, how ably so ever he may argue against personal identity. Let him lay plans for future comfort, and it is done under the conviction that he is still to continue the individual who may enjoy them. Has a building started up upon his premises, which he did not expect to see; he immediately asks who erected it there, and he would scarcely be satisfied to be told that the thing had appeared without any known cause, merely by a fortuitous combination of atoms. Thus you perceive that whatever may be a man's theory or argument, these principles do exert a practical influence upon his conduct, thereby showing that they are innate principles, interwoven into the very constitution of his nature, and not dependent upon his education. It is of importance that, in

the investigation or defence of truth, you should bear in mind these instinctive principles of belief ; otherwise you may find yourself arguing against positions and principles which cannot be refuted by argument, when your course should be simply an appeal to these innate principles.

I pass now to the consideration of another but kindred topic, to the considerations of different kinds of evidence as appropriate to different subjects of belief. And first, there is mathematical evidence. It is peculiar in its character, and is applicable only to a peculiar class of subjects. But, when it is applied, its conclusions amount to demonstration, absolute, positive demonstration which cannot be doubted, or gainsaid. It can be proved, for example, that in a right angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse, or of the longest side, is equal to the sum of the squares of the two other sides. This, I say, can be proved. But how is it proved? It is by mathematical demonstration. Certain self-evident mathematical principles, or axioms, are taken as the starting points, from these certain inferences are

drawn, which result in the demonstration of other and before unknown mathematical truths. Then these are taken as a new basis, and inferences are drawn from them, which result in the demonstration of other and before established mathematical truths, and so on.— Each conclusion is a demonstration, and consequently, when once established, may, ever after be taken as a principle fixed and incontrovertible, and may be used as the basis of further reasoning. In regard to this kind of reasoning, there is no possibility of being led astray by the influences of one's passions, prejudices, or wishes. The course, from the starting point to the conclusion, is direct, and there is no opening for the influence of feelings or desires. In the second place, if there should be an error in the conclusion, it may be certainly known, by the individual himself, that it is an error, because he may retrace his steps and, in that way, detect the error. In the third place, there is no chance for difference of opinion in regard to the conclusion, you have only to retrace the steps and reconstruct the demonstration or solution, in order to

arrive at a correct conclusion. There is no chance for argument, bickering or contention. Such is mathematical evidence. By this species of evidence certain things can be proved, demonstrated, and the truth of them put beyond a doubt. But then, you perceive, that it is only to a peculiar class of subjects that this reasoning can be applied. You cannot prove that Alexander once lived, you cannot prove that Buonaparte conquered much of Europe, by mathematical evidence. These are subjects which, if proved at all, must be proved by an altogether different kind of evidence. If you attempt to prove the truth of a position by mathematical evidence, and do not succeed, the position itself may be true, although its truth is to be proved by other and a different kind of evidence.

Then there is probable evidence. I will illustrate this kind of evidence, by reference to a theological subject, which has occurred in my own reading, within a short time. There are some, who doubt whether Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, generally called the Pentateuch. They contend

that these books are of a later origin, were written by some one else and ascribed to Moses, in order to secure for them, in the eyes of the Jewish people, the sanction of authority and antiquity. Now how is the objection met, and by what sort of evidence and of reason can it be proved, that Moses wrote these books? You cannot prove it by mathematical reasoning. You might expect perhaps to prove it by historical evidence, by the testimony either direct or indirect, of contemporaneous writers, but in this particular case this cannot be done, because there are no witnesses, so old as these, provided Moses was the author of them. That he was the author is proved, then, only by probable evidence, and probable reasoning. And now, just follow the process of probable reasoning, which is pursued. First, it is admitted, as a fact, that there have existed, from the earliest ages, among the Jews, institutions of a peculiar character, embodying and sustaining a pure theology. From the earliest period, in which the Jews appeared in history, they are found in possession of the doctrine of one all per-

vading spirit, as God, presiding over all things, in distinction from the many local and national Gods of the nations around them. Then too, the Jewish notions of the character and attributes of this God, are pure, compared with the views which appear in the literature and history of other nations. Here then is a historical fact, admitted by all. This fact must be accounted for, in some way or other. Now, if we admit that Moses wrote these books, it serves to explain this peculiar fact, in a very natural and easy manner, and, therefore, it is probable, from this circumstance, that he did write them. But suppose he did not, still you must account for the peculiar institutions and theological views of the nation. Suppose then that these books were written by some one in the time of the Judges. But these times were disturbed and unsettled, not times for establishing peculiar laws, and introducing peculiar views of Theology. And then, too, these times were too near the time of the alleged ministry of Moses, to admit of a fabricated account of events, which, if real, must have been matter of great

notoriety, and within the recollection of many. These are the objections to the position that these books were written in the times of the Judges—objections, which render it more probable that Moses wrote them, than that they should have been then written, by some one else, and passed off as his.

But, suppose we come down still later to the time of the Kings. There an insurmountable objection at once arises. The whole character and bearing of the Jewish institutions, as described in the first five books of scripture, are thoroughly republican, and of course, when there was a monarch, the time had passed away for any such system to be devised. If we come down later, to the time of Ezra, or of Nehemiah, we are met still with objections. In the first place, the people then manifested a great regard for the authority of these laws, which could not have been the case, had they been a fabrication, then, for the first time, brought forward. Still further, we know that, soon after this period, these books were translated into Greek, and we find, that, in many instances,

this Greek translation must have followed a different Hebrew copy from that which we now have, and this shews us that at that time there must have been different copies. These copies being transcripts of the original, would not have been multiplied, had not the books been well known and favorably regarded.— We conclude therefore, as the result of this whole process, as the result of these several probabilities, that it is more probable that Moses was the author, than it is to suppose that they could have been written at any later period. This, you perceive, is a specimen of probable reasoning. And you will notice that it differs from mathematical reasoning. In mathematical reasoning each step is proved conclusively and satisfactorily, and is of itself absolutely true, whether the final conclusion be true or not. In probable reasoning, the different points of argument are not really steps in a regular process, following each other in the natural order. They are simply different items of evidence, no one of which does, in itself, prove any thing, but the cumulative force of which when taken

together does give to the final conclusion a strong degree of probability. You see too in this, that, unlike mathematical reasoning, there is, at every step, danger of being led astray by the influence of prejudices, pre-conceived opinions, feelings and desires. These may cause one view to appear to one mind the more probable, and another view to appear to another mind more probable. You perceive, too, that here is room for the individual to be in error, and not be able himself to detect his errors, because, as he reviews his course of reasoning, the probabilities will appear to his mind as at first. You see, still further, that there may be room, at every successive step of the process, and also in regard to the final conclusion, for difference of opinion. Such is probable reasoning. It is the kind of reasoning and of evidence most commonly employed, that is, it is applicable to a greater variety of subjects. Look into the orations of antiquity. Listen to the debates of any modern legislative assembly, or to the arguments addressed to a jury, and you will find the whole a process of probable

reasoning. So too this is the kind of reasoning and of evidence which is brought forward in the pulpit, in stating the evidences, in setting forth the doctrines, and in urging the practical principles of our religion. And so too in all the ordinary walks of life, probable reasoning must be employed, and probable evidence must be relied on.

Still further, there is Historical evidence, differing in some respects from Probable. But as this is so seldom employed in the ordinary pursuits of life and is so intimately connected with probable evidence in securing conclusions I need not dwell at length upon it.

It is important to know when and how to use these different kinds of evidence. Are you engaged in business, and are you called to balance your account with one from whose account you differ in the result, when the items are the same. What evidence do you seek, and what course do you pursue, to convince either yourself or him? You simply retrace your steps and repeat your process. Are you engaged in an argument with another

in an ordinary debate? Here you should understand and be able to apply probable reasoning, to point out clearly and establish fully the real probabilities, on the various points which are made—to detect fallacy, and to point out the true application of the various items of probable evidence, in the establishment of the final conclusion. You should then endeavor to understand the nature, the appropriate subjects, and the right application of these different kinds of evidence, and of reasoning, as applied to different subjects.

I am next to point out and illustrate the process of reasoning. In a process of reasoning, there are three different operations of the mind, that should be attended to. First, there is simple apprehension, as it is called in books upon logic, which is simply the conception which the mind may form of any subject or objects. Second, there is the judgment, as it is called in logic, that is, the comparing together two ideas and pronouncing that they either agree or disagree; or rather, I should say, pronouncing upon the relation, whatever it may be, which they sustain to

each other; and, third, there is reasoning, or the passing from one judgment to another, founded upon or resulting from the first. Let me illustrate by a case taken from the books. In Whately's Logic I find the following process of reasoning, stated in exact logical or syllogistical form:

“Every dispensation of providence is beneficial.”

Afflictions are dispensations of providence. Therefore, afflictions are beneficial. Now in the first place there is simple apprehension, that is, the mind must form an idea of what is meant by the expression, “dispensations of providence,” and the term “beneficial”? We must then compare the term beneficial with our ideas of dispensations, so as to be able to pronounce whether they agree or not, whether the latter may be affirmed of the other or not, and, if so, whether it may be affirmed universally, or only with limitations. Here then are the two first steps—we have formed clear ideas of the meaning of the terms, and, by comparing the two, we have formed a judgment in regard to the relation which they bear

to each. The third step is proceeding from one judgment to another, founded upon and growing out of the first. In the process under examination, the first conclusion is, that the dispensations of providence are beneficial. But the suggestion is made that afflictions are dispensations of providence. Then we pass on to the next conclusion, growing out of or resulting directly from the last, that afflictions are beneficial. Now suppose this process were to be carried still farther, and suppose another suggestion be made, that we should be truly grateful for all benefits bestowed by God. Then another conclusion would follow, growing out of the last, that we should be grateful to God for every afflictive dispensation of his providence. I do not say that this process is correct. I have brought it forward simply to illustrate the mode in which a course of reasoning proceeds, when we are enabled to proceed regularly. Here the first position, that the dispensations of providence are beneficial, may be regarded as the premises from which are deduced all the succeeding conclusions. If

you can induce an opponent to admit the truth of these premises in all the length and breadth of this general statement, then it would seem that he must follow on to the final conclusion. But, suppose it were proposed to meet this process of argument, how could it be done? It might be done in some one of these several ways. In the first place, the premises might be questioned. It might be said that the proposition is not universally true, that there are some dispensations which are not ordered as benefits, and are not to be regarded as benefits; they are ordered as avenging punishments, and should be regarded as such. Then it might be said that afflictions fall under this class of dispensations, and are not therefore to be regarded as beneficial. Then, still further, it might be argued that humility and penitence, and not gratitude, are the appropriate states of mind under these dispensations, and therefore we are not called upon to be grateful for afflictions—but to be penitent under them. This is one way in which the argument might be met. Then again, it might be met in this way: The truth of the

first proposition might be admitted, and then it might be argued that there are many afflictions which are not to be regarded as dispensations of providence; that much of sickness, and often times even death, is but the natural result of our violation of the laws of our system, and, consequently, that it does not follow from the first position, that we ought to be grateful for these afflictions. I would repeat again the caution, that I am not expressing my opinion upon the truth of either side of this question. I am only illustrating processes of argument and counter argument. Suppose then, a question before you for debate were, "Ought men to cherish gratitude to God for the afflictions to which they may be subjected in life?" You see how the one side and the other might be supported.—There would undoubtedly other arguments suggest themselves to other minds, as for example one might argue from the known good effects of afflictions upon the character, that we should be grateful, and then another might answer that, in some cases, at least, if not in many, the known effects are evil, being des-

pair and even derangement, and, consequently, that the conclusion of the other is unsound, for that we are called upon to be grateful only for good influences, and only in cases where these are manifested, and not for afflictions, which may be followed by evil as well as by good effects.

Upon these illustrations, it is obvious, to remark, that, in making an argument and establishing its truth, you are to look at two points. First, you are to look at your premises, to see that they are perfectly true, in all points, well supported, and that they cover the very ground which you wish to occupy and not some other ground nearly resembling it; and that they cover the whole of that ground. In the second place, you are to look at your conclusions, from these premises, to see that they are legitimately drawn and well supported. Then you are to look in a different direction, to see if there may not be other premises, established by your opponent, and other arguments drawn from them, which, allowing all that you have said, to be true, do yet over balance and outweigh your argu-

ments. So in replying to an opponent, you are first to examine his premises. It may be that if you admit these you must admit his conclusions. It may be therefore that you will be called upon to direct the whole force of your argument against the correctness of the premises; and it may be too, that you will be able to point out a fault in these, which will invalidate his whole argument, and save you the trouble of going further.

Or, perhaps, you may admit the correctness of the premises, and then may be able to point out some incorrectness in the drawing of inferences from these premises. Or, it may be, that you will admit the correctness of his whole argument, and then overpower the whole by still stronger arguments of a different character. It is often the case, that an essential circumstance is lost sight of in the argument, which, by being brought to light, gives an entirely different view of the whole. For example, suppose that in England the question were proposed as to the expediency of giving a good thorough education to the lower orders of society. It is opposed by such an argument as

this: Society could not exist without some to perform the menial services, which are now performed by these lower orders. But all past experience and observation have shown, that, when an individual of these orders has acquired a good education, he is puffed up and will not consent to perform these labors. Therefore, were all to be educated, these labors would be generally neglected, and society must suffer—consequently, it would be inexpedient to educate the lower orders of society. Such is the argument in opposition. Now, in answer to such an argument, it might be said, we admit the truth of the first position, that these menial services and duties are necessary. We admit the second position that all past experience and observation show that, when one of the lower orders is well educated, he is puffed up and unwilling to perform these duties. But we deny the correctness of the inference from these two positions, because an essential circumstance is over looked. In past times, the reason that one of the lower orders, when educated, was puffed up, was that by that education he was distinguished from, and rendered superior

to, his brethren. But, in time to come, should this education become universal, which is proposed, this distinction will be removed, and all will be alike—therefore, although the premises are correct, the inference is not to be relied upon. The argument might be answered in this way, — then other arguments might be brought forward to shew the probability of a different result.

I have thus endeavored to illustrate the process of reason, of argument and debate.

I will now proceed to notice some of the causes of differences of opinion. It sometimes seems to us strange that two men on reading or hearing the same argument, should go away with entirely different, it may be with opposite impressions in regard to it. And we are sometimes inclined to believe that one or the other cannot be honest in his opinions. But a little thought will convince us that this is a very unjust, as well as a very unkind conclusion, and this will the more fully appear, if we look at some of the causes of differences of opinion.

I. In the first place, men's wishes and interests have a great influence over their opin-

ions. Suppose that an individual believed that it would be greatly for his interest to hold certain opinions upon political subjects, on points in regard to which he had before but vague notions. What course would he pursue, naturally, I mean, and without being aware of any undue influence? Would he not dwell much upon the arguments which are urged on that side of the question to which his interest inclined him? Most surely he would, and the consequence would be, that arguments would have, to his mind, an entirely different appearance from what they would under other circumstances.

II. Then, too, a man's pride of character and of reputation has often a great weight and influence upon his opinions. If he has been the champion of certain opinions, and has for years stood forth before the community as such, he cannot view arguments upon the subject as he otherwise would. A few years since, there was a public discussion in one of the country towns of Massachusetts, between two clergymen of different sentiments, in regard to a point on which they differed. One of them

stated in a public paper that he should go to that discussion with a perfect devotion to truth, with a single desire to establish or to learn the truth, and with a perfect willingness to make acknowledgment of his past errors, should he be convinced. I have no reason to doubt that he honestly thought that he should do so. And yet, from my own observation of human nature, and especially of the operations of my own mind, I believe it to be utterly impossible that he could do so. He had been known for years as the champion of peculiar views,—he had acquired a reputation for his skill in their defence. At the debate, his friends would rally around him, looking to him as their champion. Under such circumstances, what would be the operation of his mind upon hearing an opponent's argument? It would not be a careful examination of that argument, to see if it were true or not; but only an examination to see how it could best be answered.—Then, too, he is immediately to follow in a reply. Would his pride of character—of reputation permit him to rise and say frankly to that argument, I cannot make a reply? Most

surely not. As for myself, I think that I can read the arguments of an opponent in my study, where there is no eye upon me but that of the Being to whom I am accountable, with a simple desire to know the truth. But I do not believe that I could engage in a public debate with such feelings.

III. Again, words are used in different senses, and this gives rise to differences of opinions. It is not what a book or an argument actually expresses, but what it suggests to the mind of the reader, which determines its effect on his mind. But words may be used by the writer or speaker, in one sense, which have always been used by the hearer in a different sense. I once knew a singular instance of this. A very pious and devout man was speaking against dancing schools. A young friend undertook to defend them. In his defence, he said that he thought that there was no place in which young ladies and gentlemen acquired so much grace—using the term grace to express the idea of gracefulness in attitude,—motion, and manners. The other, who had always used the word grace in a religious sense, was

horror struck at the suggestion. "Go to the dancing school", he exclaimed, "for grace! Rather resort to the closet and to prayer." Here was a very striking result,—both were honest,—but they used a single word only, in different senses. Had there been no explanation, with what prejudices might each have left the other! What prejudices might the pious and devout person have carried away in regard to the religious feelings of the other, who was of a different denomination from himself! Indeed, so often have I found this, the using of the same word in different senses, giving rise to contentions and disputes, that I have been inclined to think that a very large proportion of our difficulties arise from this source.

IV. Once more, men's passions and emotions have a powerful influence upon their opinions. It is in this way: Men's minds are affected in a long process of reasoning or argument, by what, in the course of that argument, most arrests and fixes their attention. But the passions and feelings and emotions of a man have a powerful influence in fixing the mind upon which, in the argument, may be in accordance

with their feelings and emotions. This circumstance, therefore, may occasion some arguments to come before the mind more prominently and to remain longer in view than others,—consequently some will make a deep impression, whilst others will be forgotten. And as different men may be under the influence of different emotions, so very different impressions may be made upon the minds of different individuals by the same book, argument, discourse, or process of reasoning.

Thus, you perceive, that it is not so strange that men should differ in opinion, and that honestly too, without being conscious of being under any undue influence, and after an equally careful investigation.

I have thus, my young friends, offered a few hints and suggestions upon the subject of intellectual self-education, which, I would hope, may serve to aid you in your endeavors. I have dwelt longer upon the subject than I otherwise should have done, because I have thought that there are hints, important and practical, contained in books upon mental Philosophy, which ought to be laid open to all.

I have never seen any reason why a young man who is engaged in agriculture, mechanical or mercantile pursuits, should not study mental Philosophy, and form the habit of watching and scrutinizing the operations of his own mind, as well as the professional man. My desire is to awaken every young man, whatever his pursuits may be, to a full faith in himself as an intellectual, moral, and spiritual being, and to give some assistance in all efforts at self-cultivation. I have, in these letters, endeavored to impress your minds with a just sense of the importance of the season of youth, to point out to you the true object of life, to guard you against some injurious mistakes to which you are exposed, and to awaken you to a watchful study of your own minds. I have also pointed out to you some of the sources of moral danger, and it now remains only that, in a closing letter, I should endeavor to impress upon your minds the necessity of religion as the crown and completion of your whole character.

You may perhaps ask why I have entered no more fully into the details and processes of moral self-cultivation? My answer is, that I

know of no sure, sound, and enduring morality, but that which is prompted by religious motives, based upon religious principles, and guided by the instructions of religion. To enter into the details and processes of moral self-cultivation when viewed in this light, would require a volume, and that volume would be truly a religious work. I have thought it best therefore to speak upon the necessity of religion—and leave my readers to their own religious teachers for counsel in regard to the details and processes of religious and moral self-cultivation.

LETTER XI.

THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION.

Introduction—The proposition stated that religion is absolutely necessary to man's highest improvement and greatest happiness—This proposition explained—The argument—that man's highest improvement and best happiness is secured only by the proper cultivation and development of all the various parts of his nature—all the tendencies and capacities of his soul—This illustrated—The position stated that man has a spiritual nature—Conscience—the feeling of reverence and devotion, and a longing for the absolute and the perfect elements of spiritual nature—The cultivation of these not identical with intellectual improvement—The conclusion drawn from these premises—An appeal to the young—Religion needful to the formation of a full and perfect character—necessary to the enjoyment of full and perfect happiness—peculiarly necessary to the young—Religion to be secured during the season of youth, of health, and of mental vigor—Conclusion.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

As I suggested at the close of my last letter, I am now to address you in this closing let-

ter upon the necessity of religion, or of religious self-cultivation. In doing this I wish to invite your attention to the consideration of this distinct proposition, that religion is absolutely necessary to man's best improvement and highest happiness. But what, you may ask, do I mean, when I make the assertion, that religion is absolutely necessary to man's best improvement and highest happiness? Do I mean that no improvement can be made, and no happiness enjoyed, without religion? I answer, that I mean no such thing. For I admit, not only that some, but that much improvement may be made and much happiness may be, and often is enjoyed, without religion. He whose bodily health has by temperance and exercise, been carefully preserved, is to a certain degree, happy in the enjoyment of health. He whose intellect has been cultivated and whose taste has been refined and purified, will enjoy much happiness in the pleasures of taste and intellect. He will experience a high degree of happiness in viewing a beautiful painting, in reading the productions of gifted minds, in

listening to the strains of eloquence or the harmony of music. And, most surely, such an one has made great improvement, compared with him in whom taste and intellect have been neglected. He, in whom kind and amiable dispositions have been carefully cultivated, and whose social feelings are properly developed, he who is the loving husband, the kind father, the amiable and obliging neighbor and friend, will enjoy much happiness in the pleasures of society and of friendship, and he is elevated in the scale of improvement, far above him who is sour, morose, savage and unsocial. Let me be understood then, at the outset, as distinctly making the admission that much improvement may be made and much happiness enjoyed without religion. And let it be understood too, why I make this admission. It is because I know, that in the minds of some, there is a lurking skepticism, when one speaks of the absolute necessity of religion to man's improvement and happiness. Such are ready to say, you need not say this to us. We know that we are more improved, in mind and heart

and character, than many around us, and we are conscious of enjoying from day to day, and from year to year, much happiness, while yet we are, and acknowledge ourselves to be, destitute of religion. Such are apt to conclude, when one speaks of religion as *necessary*, that he speaks as a matter of duty, and because it is a part of his professional labor so to speak, or because he is himself deceived and has become a fanatic. Now if there are any such among my readers who are beginning to compose themselves into a state of indifference as to what I am about to say, with the thought that this is but the old story the necessity of religion, to them I would say, I admit the truth of what you assert, that you are more improved than many around you, and that you may and actually do enjoy much happiness, while yet destitute of religion.—Your assertion does not militate at all with the truth of the proposition which I wish at this time to establish, that religion is absolutely necessary to man's *greatest* improvement and *highest* happiness. And what I mean is this, that the improvement which you have

made, and the happiness which you do enjoy, are not so complete, and pure, and unalloyed as they would be if you were truly religious, and, still further, that your improvement has not reached the standard which it might have reached, under the influence of religion, and that your happiness falls far short of that, which, under the influence of religion, you are capable of enjoying. These are the points which it will be my object to prove. And, upon the ground of the full and fair admission which I have made, I would ask your serious and candid attention to the remarks I may offer.

I know not but you may here turn upon me again and ask what I mean by religion? do I mean any particular form or mode of worship? do I mean that it is absolutely necessary to a man's highest happiness and greatest improvement that he should believe as I do, worship as I do, or even practice in all things as I do? I answer, that this is not what I mean. I would remark that we use the term religion, in our ordinary intercourse with each other, in two different senses. We

speak of the Mahomedan Religion, the Hindoo Religion, the Christian Religion. And we mean by this mode of speech, to designate the particular collection of doctrines and precepts and ceremonies and ordinances and institutions, which are respectively peculiar to these different religions. So we speak of the Roman Catholic Religion and of the Protestant Religion, in the same sense. When we speak in this way, you perceive that we mean something, which is entirely without ourselves; something which, like different systems of Philosophy may be the subjects of our examination, of our belief or disbelief. But then again, we speak of religion as the personal possession of an individual man. We say, of one under temptation, that his religion has strengthened him to withstand, of one in affliction, that his religion has given him support and consolation, of one who is near the approach of death, that his religion has given him peace and joy in the prospects of a future world. Here you perceive that we use the term religion to denote something, which is within the individual of whom the remark

is made, to denote the state of his mind, affections, desires, principles and feelings. We mean that the religious tendencies of his nature have been properly cherished and developed, that his desires, affections and principles are all in a religious state, that his appetites and passions are all under the control of religious influences. It is in this latter sense that I use the term religion, when I say that it is necessary to man's highest happiness and improvement. I mean that man cannot make all the improvement, not enjoy all the happiness, of which his nature is capable, unless the religious tendencies of his nature are carefully cultivated and properly developed, unless his soul is in a religious frame. Having made these introductory explanations, I now come to the argument.

I. And first,—I suppose it will be admitted by all, that, if any one part of man's nature be neglected, the improvement made and the happiness enjoyed will not be so great as it would have been, had this part been properly exercised, strengthened and developed. And the reverse of this will of course be admitted

by all, that he, in whom all the various parts and tendencies of his nature are properly developed, will, other things being equal, make the greatest improvement and enjoy the highest degree of happiness. Here, for example, is one who is intent upon the improvement of his intellect. His object is to acquire knowledge, and, by storing his mind with knowledge, to exercise, strengthen and develop his mental powers. To this he devotes his thoughts, his labors, his time. And he succeeds, for a time. He makes rapid acquisitions of knowledge,—he is acquiring great mental power, great depth and justness of thought, great soundness of judgment. But, while doing this, he neglects his physical nature, and soon his health fails before his unremitting application. Now, you will admit, that this individual cannot make so great improvement, cannot enjoy so great happiness, as he would have done had his physical system been properly exercised, strengthened and developed. His intellectual progress is entirely arrested, or much impeded, by his ill health. The happiness which he enjoys in

intellectual efforts is much diminished by his pains of body. You will admit, that in this case, relating only to bodily health and intellectual vigor, he who cultivates but one, to the neglect of the other, cannot make so great improvement, cannot enjoy so great happiness, as if he had properly exercised, strengthened and developed both parts of his nature. And so, if you take the reverse, and suppose an individual to have exercised and cultivated his physical system, to the neglect of intellectual improvement, he will not make so great improvement, in all in which man is capable of improving, as if both parts of his nature had been cultivated. Take still another illustration.—Here is one who has cultivated bodily health and intellectual vigor, but has neglected his social nature, has become sour, morose and utterly selfish, taking no interest in the happiness of those around him, enjoying no pleasure in their society, and ever fretting at their intrusion. I need not, I trust, say that such an one does not enjoy as much, as he would have done, had this part of his nature been properly cultivated. For this

all will at once admit. All will admit that our enjoyment of intellectual pleasures even is much enhanced by sharing those pleasures with other kindred minds. But I will say that he will not make so great improvement. It is often the case that in our private studies we fall into errors, which might be corrected, and imbibe prejudices which might be removed, and acquire narrow and contracted notions which might be enlarged, if we were to associate freely and pleasantly with others. It is often the case, too, that he, whose mind is becoming languid and torpid, under long continued solitary study, will find himself refreshed and invigorated by free and kind intercourse with his fellows, so that a certain number of hours, spent partly in study and partly in society, will result in greater improvement, than the same number of hours spent in continued study or in solitary musings. You will admit then, I trust, that if any part of man's nature be neglected, he cannot make so great improvement, cannot enjoy so great happiness, as he would have done had all the various parts of his nature been properly cul-

tivated and developed. But of what practical importance is this conclusion? Do not men act in reference to it? Do not those of good judgment and rational views in regard to happiness, regulate their conduct in their individual efforts, by a regard to this conclusion? Do they not strive, by temperance and exercise, to strengthen and develop their bodily powers? Do they not, by study, thought, and reflection, seek for intellectual improvement? Do they not strive to purify and elevate and refine their social feelings? And is not this done in order to secure greater degrees of improvement and a greater amount of happiness? And what theoretical inference does this conclusion authorize? Suppose, for example, you knew nothing of spiritual capacities—that man was not created a spiritual being, but that you were informed, upon undoubted authority, that a being had appeared upon earth in all other respects like man, but possessing in addition to all man's capacities, a spiritual nature—taste for spiritual enjoyments, and capacities for spiritual improvement. Would you not conclude at once, from what you have learned of

the will of God, as developed in man's constitution, that such a being would enjoy greater happiness, and make greater improvement, if these spiritual tastes and capacities were cultivated and developed, than he could if they were neglected? Would you not feel that, where God has bestowed a power, and especially a power of so high a character as this, it was intended that it should be exercised, strengthened and developed, and that this development would be productive of increased improvement and happiness? Still further, suppose you could become fully satisfied in your own mind that man, that you yourselves — had been blessed with spiritual natures, tastes for spiritual pleasures, and capacities for spiritual life, progress and enjoyment, would you not, at once, admit that, from what you have learned of God's will in the other parts of your nature, it was his intention that you should cultivate, strengthen and develop these spiritual natures, and, that by so doing, you would arrive at higher degrees of improvement, and attain to higher degrees of enjoyment and happiness, than if you neglect-

ed them. Are not these theoretical inferences fairly drawn from the conclusion at which we had arrived? And here let us pause and review the argument, and see what progress we have made, and where we now stand. We have found that, if any one part of man's nature be neglected—if any portion of his capacities and tendencies be suffered to lie dormant or to run to waste, he cannot make so great improvement, nor enjoy so great happiness, as he would if all the various parts, capacities and tendencies of his nature were properly exercised, strengthened and developed, that there is absolute and insurmountable impossibility in the thing. Now is not this conclusion legitimately drawn? fairly supported? I have looked at the argument and can see no flaw in it. And the conclusion seems to me to be as strictly and absolutely true, as that two and two make four. It is often said by writers on health, that you cannot cheat nature, meaning man's physical nature, bodily system,—that, if you do not give the body its proper amount of exercise and sleep, and its appropriate kind and quality of nourishment,

you must suffer for the neglect, that if you do not experience the evil consequences, at once, you will sooner or later experience them, that pains will be induced, health enfeebled and death caused, by such neglect. So I say of man's whole system. You cannot cheat nature. If you neglect the appropriate exercise and cultivation of any part of his nature, although you may not experience the unhappy consequences, at once, yet you will sooner or later experience them. Let this conclusion, then, that if any part of man's natural capacities and tendencies be neglected, he cannot make so great improvement, nor enjoy so great happiness as he would, were all parts properly cultivated — let this conclusion be fixed in your minds as a simple, undoubted, important truth, yea as a truth of direct and immediate personal, practical application. Thus far have we gone. Nay more, we have gone farther. We have seen that men of sound minds and rational notions, do regulate their conduct by a reference to these views, and we have drawn from our conclusion the theoretical inference that if man does naturally manifest spiritual

capacities and religious tendencies, he must attend to these and cultivate them, in order to make all the improvement and enjoy all the happiness of which his nature is capable. I have already asked, if this inference be not fairly drawn; to me it seems that it is—that it is as true as it is that if you take three from five there will remain two. And I would hope that this inference will be admitted into your minds, and fixed there, as a real simple truth, attended with important practical bearings.— Thus far have we gone. And here we now stand, poised upon that little word, IF — IF man possesses a spiritual nature.

II. And now I proceed, in the second place, to examine the question which hangs upon that little word—the question, does man possess a spiritual nature? And here I begin with the assertion that man does possess a spiritual nature — tastes for spiritual joys, and capacities for spiritual improvement, progress and growth. I have made an assertion. I will attempt to prove its truth.

1st. Man is possessed of conscience. This you and I know, for we have felt compunc-

tions of conscience, and approbations of conscience. There cannot be one among my readers who has not experienced the feeling of self-approval, when he had done what he thought to be right, and the feeling of self-disapprobation, when he had done what he believed to be wrong. We are conscious of possessing conscience. You may say that conscience is but the artificial creation of human customs, and may attempt to prove the truth of your assertion by shewing that the decisions of conscience vary in different circumstances, to accord with different customs. But this proof does not meet the case. On the contrary it implies an admission of the very proposition it professes to deny. It goes to prove that the decisions of conscience vary with the degrees of light and instruction enjoyed by the individual whose conscience decides. But how could this be true if there were no conscience to decide? The very objection then is based upon the supposition that man does possess conscience. And this position it is in vain to argue against. If your child has done what he believes to be wrong, you cannot con-

vince him that he did not experience a feeling of self-disapprobation. You may puzzle him by your hard words, and, to him, unintelligible arguments, but still he knows what he has felt. His consciousness has told him that he felt self-condemned, and he cannot disbelieve his own consciousness. Man then is possessed of conscience — it is one of his natural capacities. It is as much bestowed upon him in his creation as the power of locomotion is bestowed upon beasts and birds. Conscience is as truly one of his natural capacities, as locomotion is one of their natural capacities.

2d. Again, man is possessed of the sentiment of veneration or devotion. There is, in the very constitution of his nature, a tendency of this kind. This tendency may have given strange manifestations of itself — may have led to excesses and abuses, but these only prove the existence and strength of the principle itself. I say this is one of the inherent tendencies of his nature, because wherever man is found, there, in some form or other, is manifested this principle of veneration or religious devotion. You find man bowing in worship.

In the language of another I would say, "No matter what may be the immediate or ostensible object of this sentiment, a log, a stone, or a star, the God of the hills, or the God of the plains, Jehovah, Jove or Lord; still it is veneration, still it is devotion. Neither can the principle itself, by any shew of evidence or just analysis, be resolved into a mere figment of the brain, or a mere creature of circumstances, for, in some form or other, it has manifested itself, under all circumstances, and, in every stage of the mind's growth, as having its root and foundation in the soul. There is then in man a tendency disposing him to look upwards to a higher power and inducing faith in the invisible."

Nearly connected with this, is a natural tendency in man to reach after the absolute and the perfect. If man thinks of love, of purity, of holiness, of justice, benevolence and truth, there is the feeling that all which he has yet seen, and all which he now knows of these, is imperfect, and only to be found in connection with peculiar circumstances and partial developments. But, why does he feel that there

is, some where the absolute and the perfect, in love, truth, and holiness? Because he has the power of forming the idea of the absolute and the perfect in these. Let a man advance to as high degrees of love, purity, and holiness, as you can imagine him to advance, and still there will be connected with his satisfaction at having made such progress, the feeling that he falls short—there is the longing, the reaching forth for the absolute and the perfect, and never is this longing satisfied, this reaching forth assuaged, until the mind is employed upon contemplations of the absolute and the perfect, as revealed by religion. This reaching after the absolute and the perfect is a natural tendency. It is found in the child, weak and imperfect indeed it may be, but still there. It is found in the untutored savage, in the ignorant and superstitious, as well as in the enlightened and refined, among christians. To use the language of the author already quoted, “We may say that the very idea of imperfection as such, involves some faint glimmering of the idea of the perfect, with which it is compared, and without which imperfection would be to us

as perfection. So likewise, in contemplating things accidental and dependent, the idea of the absolute grows up in the mind; the idea of something that is not accidental and dependent, and on which every thing that is accidental and dependent, rests and is sustained. In short, the mind of man is so constituted, that, in the full development of its intellectual powers it can find no real satisfaction, no resolution of its doubts and difficulties, but in the idea of the absolute and the perfect. Take away this idea, and existence itself becomes an enigma. Give back this idea, and it again becomes a consistent, intelligible, and magnificent whole."

I have named conscience, the sentiment of veneration or devotion, and the longing for the absolute and the perfect, as capacities and tendencies which are found in man, as natural capacities and tendencies. I believe them to be, in a certain sense, distinct from his intellectual powers. The intellectual powers may be cultivated and these comparatively neglected. A man may acquire vast stores of knowledge, may acquire great depth of thought upon

subjects to which his mind has been directed, while yet the tenderness of his conscience may not be increased; the correctness of his moral judgment may not be improved. So a man may have the sentiment of veneration developed, in perfect and correct operation, while yet he is but an inferior man in an intellectual point of view. These capacities and tendencies are, then, in some sense, distinct from and independent of mere intellectual culture. Indeed, they are no more dependent upon intellectual culture, than intellectual vigor is dependent upon physical development.

But these tendencies and capacities and aspirations, and others like them, constitute what I call man's spiritual nature. They distinguish him from all inferior grades of being; they have laws peculiar to themselves, in accordance with which they may be cherished and improved. They require a particular kind of exercise and development, distinct from bodily exercise, different from social or mental culture. They constitute his tastes for spiritual joys, his capacity for spiritual progress. They are capable of being exercised and developed and dwelt

upon, until they shall afford a peculiar kind and degree of happiness. You have seen men so absorbed in intellectual efforts as to be rendered unconscious of the cravings of nature — as to forget the appropriate season and place of their meals. So have we seen men so absorbed in their contemplations of the spiritual and the eternal — so sustained by their faith and their hope, so enraptured by religious enjoyment, that they have been rendered calm and even cheerful in the midst of pain and poverty — while under the power of disease, and at the approach of death. Here, then, my young friends, let us pause a second and see where we are. We have found that there is in man conscience, the sentiment of veneration or devotion, and a longing for the absolute and the perfect. That these belong to a part of our nature, as distinct from intellectual faculties, as intellectual faculties are distinct from bodily powers. That they require a distinct and separate culture, and that when cultivated, they give a weight of character and an amount of happiness which is independent of the intellectual character. I appeal to every one

of my readers, are not these facts plain and simple facts? Has not your own past consciousness revealed them to you, as inherent in your own soul? I trust it has. These and other similar qualities constitute man's spiritual nature and tastes and capacities, and fit him for spiritual progress and happiness. But, if man has a spiritual nature, you have already admitted that it should be cultivated, and if cultivated, causes him to reach a higher degree of improvement, and to secure a greater amount of happiness than could otherwise be reached or secured ; that it is absolutely necessary to man's greatest improvement and highest happiness; that this part of his nature should be cultivated and developed. But this, the right cultivation and proper development of man's spiritual nature, and its influence over the whole man, is what I mean by religion. When I say that religion is necessary to a man's improvement and happiness, I mean that it is necessary to his improvement and happiness, that his spiritual nature, his religious tendencies, should all be cherished, cultivated and developed. And have I not proved the truth of my assertion?

Is it not a simple verity, as true as that two and two make four? And is not this an important truth and a practical truth? Do you wish to reach the highest improvement, to secure the greatest happiness of which your nature is capable? Know that it is impossible, utterly and absolutely impossible, unless you become truly and personally religious — unless all the elements of your spiritual nature are cultivated and developed.

My young friends, I have treated the subject somewhat differently from the mode in which it is usually treated. I have not appealed to the feelings — I have not endeavored to alarm the fears — I have used only what has seemed to me fair argument. I have drawn only what seemed to me to be fair inferences. I have drawn only what seemed to me legitimate conclusions and inferences. I have based my arguments too, not upon peculiar speculations and theological dogmas, but upon what man's nature is, and what it requires, upon grounds which are within the range of every one's consciousness and observation. If I am wrong, you have within your own hearts or under

your own eyes, the means of detecting any error. If I am right, there is a voice within you and a voice comes from all your past experience and all your various observation, which cries amen to what I have said.

And in view of my conclusion, what should be my exhortation? I ask of you nothing wild, extravagant, or unreasonable. I ask only that, like reasonable beings you will give my conclusions their legitimate and proper influence over your conduct, the same influence which you would give to conclusions equally well founded and supported, relative to other subjects. Could I prove to you that a certain course of conduct is absolutely necessary to your enjoyment of health, or to your securing wealth, would you not pursue that course? Or, if you should not, would you not be justly obnoxious to the charge of acting like unreasonable beings? Be exhorted then by all your aspirations after improvement of character, and by all your hopes of happiness either here or hereafter, be exhorted and entreated to commence at once a religious life, to begin the cultivation of your spiritual capacities, to fit, train, and educate your souls for heaven.

But when, you will ask, is religion to be sought and acquired? The answer is plain. Now is the accepted time? The season of health and strength, and especially the season of youth, is the time. When you can apply your minds to understand its evidences, its doctrines, its duties, and when you have strength of resolution sufficient to carry you onward in the course of Christian improvement, then is the time in which to acquire religion. Sickness, and the approach of death, are seasons unfavorable to the acquisition of religious knowledge, to the cultivation of christian faith and love, to the formation of christian character. You will then need its supports and consolations. But if you would enjoy the strongest and best supports of religion in mourning and affliction, in sickness and at the approach of death, you must have been purified, elevated, guided, saved by its influence, when in health and at ease in your mind. Now then is the appropriate time in which to commence a religious course. The time that is past is gone forever. It cannot minister to your religious improvement, in any other way than as your re-

collection of what has been mispent, may arouse your exertions to redeem what may still remain to you. The future cannot be calculated upon. It may be yours or it may not. Should it be yours, you may be unfitted by bodily pain, or by mental distraction, for directing your attention to your own religious improvement. Now then, now is the time to commence a religious course? And will you not my friends at once commence your religious course. As you look onward into life, you hope to be respectable, you wish to be happy. You are now free from gross vices, and you have confidence, that by your own strength you shall ever remain so. But your confidence is without good foundation. Others stronger and more confident than you, have fallen before the insidious influence of temptation, have yielded to the power of sin. You are equally liable to fall, unless there be within you, religious principle, as a root striking deep into your affections, and spreading wide its influence over your characters. Be assured then that your characters will never be perfected, in the eye of your own con-

sciences, nor in the eye of your God, without religion. Be assured that your cup of happiness will never be full, unless religion be permitted to add her share of the ingredients. Be assured, that in all the scenes of your future life, whether it be longer or shorter, whether it be more or less varied, in all scenes, religion will be the one thing needful. I repeat, in all the scenes of life, and especially at the approach of death, come when it will, and come it must, sooner or later, religion will be the one thing needful.

And would that I could say this with an emphasis that should reach every heart and arouse every soul. But alas! so engrossed are most, even of our young men by worldly cares and temporal pursuits, so entirely taken up are they in laying up for themselves treasures on earth, that the oft repeated warnings and calls urging them to commence a religious life are passed unheeded by. Sabbath after Sabbath the call is repeated, week after week the warning that comes up from the grave of a fellow being is sounded in the ears of men, day after day, and night after night, the works

of nature proclaim this call aloud, and the spirit of God is ever operating to set it home upon the hearts that are open to its influences, and yet we are sometimes compelled to acknowledge that but few have obeyed the call, that but few have listened to the report. And when we look upon those around us and see how frail they are, how liable to disease and death, and yet how carelessly they go, we almost tremble with fear, lest the fiat of the Almighty should go forth, "I will cut them down, why burden they the ground!" We are prompted to pray in the anxiety of our souls for them, Lord, let them alone another year. But what encouragement have we to hope that at the end of another year it will be any better with them? My young friends, I do beseech you, yea, most earnestly do I intreat you, to lay it to heart, that *religion is the one thing needful*. Seek then first the kingdom of heaven. Strive principally to become personally religious. May I not hope that some will at once resolve to strive more earnestly, than they have ever yet done, to acquire christian dispositions, feelings and tem-

pers, and to form christian characters. Shall not the recording angel enter the resolve of many made as they close this volume, that for the future they will strive for the one thing needful? Shall not the inhabitants of heaven rejoice at the course of repentance, reformation and christian improvement, commenced by many who may pursue these pages.— Do not, oh, do not, I beseech you, forget as you close the book what manner of persons you are. Do not forget that to you *religion is the one thing needful*. That without this, all other possessions will be comparatively valueless, that with this every scene of life may be a scene of comparative happiness. Seek then first and principally a religious frame of mind, a religious state of the affections, a religious cast of character, and may the blessing of God attend you as you seek.

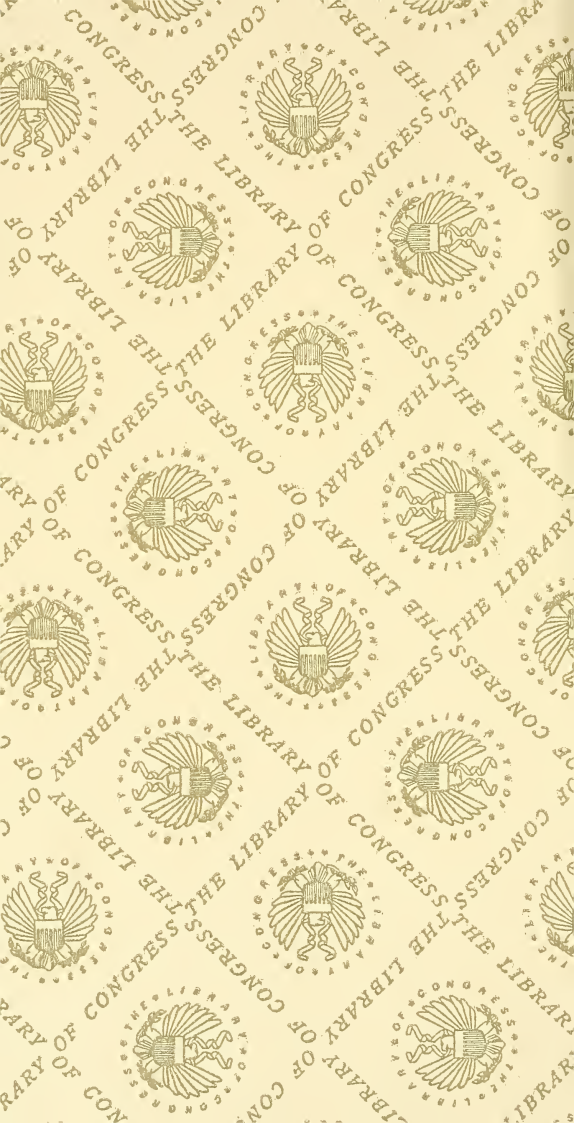
But how, you will ask, shall we commence? In answer, I would say, go to your respective religious teachers for instruction on this point. Different teachers may, perhaps, give different directions, according to their peculiar religious views. And I would not mar what I

cannot but hope may be the good influences of what I have written, by any directions which may take their coloring from my peculiar religious views. Then too, every religious teacher must vary his directions to meet the precise state of feelings and of character in the different individuals who may ask advice. What I wish therefore is to awaken you to a full and feeling sense of the importance of religion — the importance of entering at once and in earnest upon the work of becoming religious — the work of religious self-cultivation. Should what I have written awaken you to this feeling, and prompt you to go to your bibles, and to ask for counsel and direction from your respective religious teachers, I shall feel that I have been an instrument of the greatest good to your souls. I shall feel that I have done something to promote, not merely your respectability and usefulness in life, but your preparation for the realities of the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal world. I shall feel that my efforts have been blessed by God. I shall cherish the hope that parents and religious teachers, who may differ from me in religious

opinions, will rejoice in the result. I would write not as a sectarian, but as a christian. I wish to see our young men becoming truly and personally religious. Could I see this, I should rejoice, how much soever they may differ from me in religious opinions, and with whatever religious denomination they may connect themselves.

I would now, my young friends, commend what I have written to your serious and careful attention. Remember, as you meditate upon what you have read, that it is for your good that I have written. But remember, too that all which I have written will be of no avail, unless you make personal efforts in applying what you have to your own individual improvement. If what I have written shall excite you to careful thought and to earnest and regular and persevering efforts in your own social, intellectual, moral, and religious self-cultivation, then shall I be amply rewarded for my labor.





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